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Hebrew Life and Thought

Being Interpretative Studies in the Literature of Israel

BY

LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON

Author of *Telling Bible Stories*, *Life of the Lord Jesus*, etc., etc.

Chicago

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS

1907

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TO

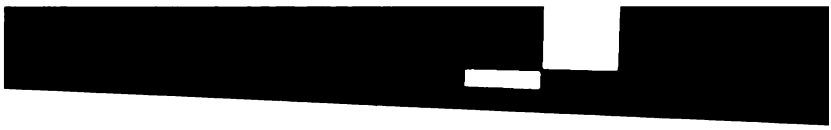
REV. GEORGE B. STEWART, D.D.

PRESIDENT OF AUBURN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY, WHOSE

LUMINOUS LIFE HAS MADE LIGHT TO ME

LIFE'S DARKEST MYSTERY, THIS BOOK

IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED



PREFACE

It is only fair to both readers and writer of these studies to say that they were written, and had been given in the form of lectures, before any of the now large and daily increasing popular literature of this subject had come into being. In the nature of things, every repetition of these lectures — and some of them have been given more than thirty times — implied their careful revision in whatever new light had been shed upon the subject; and now, before receiving their final form, they have been subjected to a very thorough revision. But as they were first written, and as they now stand, they are far more the fruit of a lifetime of Bible study than of any recent reading. That study began at an age earlier than children of today are taught to read, and has continued for more than the average lifetime. Its results have passed into the fiber of my mind, so that it would be impossible now, if it were desirable, to give authorities for many of the statements here made, or for the positions here held; or to say what, if anything, here is my own contribution to the subject. Probably very little, if anything, is original with me. The

purpose of these papers was not, and is not, to give forth original ideas, but to bring the more or less cultured but unscientific Bible student into a hospitable attitude toward the new light that scholarship has shed upon the sacred page. It has long been my conviction that if scientific scholarship had more generally availed itself of the method of culture, it would not have aroused that alarm and antagonism with which it even yet has to reckon. These papers are my effort to allay both, so far as their influence may reach, by putting into the language of culture some of those conclusions which, when clothed only in the language of scholarship, have aroused hostility which appears to me as unnecessary as it is unfortunate. My contribution to this end, therefore, like that of most popular writers, is more in the attitude of the mind which receives and gives forth the thoughts of others, than in anything new or original. It is, indeed, quite possible that the few ideas which appear to me to be mine, and which constitute the illumination which it seems to me that I have shed upon the subject, may be found in the works of other writers, though I am not aware of having found them. To me they appear to be either sudden flashes of insight, or the gradual development in my own mind of a seed-thought planted many years ago by parents of unusual culture

and breadth of vision, or casually dropped there by I know not what agency, but in any case equally the gift of God.

My warm thanks are due to Mr. John M. P. Smith, of the University of Chicago, for carefully reading the manuscript of this book and offering many valuable criticisms, which had much weight in the very thorough revision which the work received before going to the printer; and especially to Professor Julius A. Bewer, Ph.D., of Union Theological Seminary, for reading the book in proof, and making important suggestions, by which I have been very glad to profit.

L. S. H.

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CHAPTER I

THE DAY-BOOK OF THE MOST HIGH

I

It was Heine who called the Old Testament "Jehovah's diary." That sad, bewildered, dauntless spirit was not able to find in it the divine teaching which some of us discover; he could not make that application of its utterances to his own needs which to some of us is so precious; but he did see in it that which many of us fail to see, that which is its most important characteristic, making it the unique book of all the world. He saw that the Old Testament was the record of God's dealing with the entire human race. Yet it is not a history nor a philosophy of history. Bit by bit, part by part, in divers portions and in divers manners, as one sets down the events of his life in his own diary, now with ample detail, again in mere suggestion which only he who has the clue can understand — thus has God given us in this volume the revelation of a gracious purpose, the "inner history of a converse of God with man." With deeper insight than we find in the sacred books of other

peoples, the Old Testament pictures the world as ruled by the thought of God; with a certainty unknown to other ancient works, sacred or profane, it unlocks the riddles of history with God as the master-key; more completely than anything that has ever been written, in any time or tongue, it shows the entire story of the human race, past, present, and future, to be an organic unity, event growing out of event by a natural development, a process in which each step prophesies of the end — the "one far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves."

As the records of other ancient peoples are unearthed, it becomes the more impressive a fact that the Old Testament gives a more comprehensive view of history than any other work of ancient time. The first attempt to account for the various races actually present at the dawn of historic time, of which we have any record, is that found in some early chapters of Genesis; while large parts of Isaiah and some other prophets are given to a survey of the whole world as then known, showing one nation after another as it stood in relation to the divine thought for the human race, then being worked out in the history of the people Israel.

It is a mistake to think of the Jews as a separate people in a geographical sense, as if they were isolated from the world in their mountain-

and desert-girt land; they were in constant communication with all the nations then existing. It was a true instinct which led them to mark in their temple inclosure the precise center of the world. That circle of marble pavement surrounding a low pillar [1] did mark it then. Palestine was the geographical center of the world in a perfectly true sense, and Israel is still its historic center. The old rabbi who said, "Israel is among the nations as the heart among the limbs," spoke true. Israel was the vital organ of the world. It is with the heart that one sees God, as our Lord taught us,[2] and this vision and faculty divine were the heritage of the sons of Israel.

Nothing can be of profounder significance than the fact that from the earliest times the Hebrew idea of God was a moral idea. Not that Israel was the only religious nation of antiquity; the most important interests of all ancient peoples were religious interests, and this was especially the case with the Semitic peoples, to which great family the Hebrews belonged. Nothing is more striking than the revelation of this fact by the lately discovered inscriptions of Assyria and Babylonia, Moab and Phœnicia. All their wars were religious wars; all good and evil came to

[1] Christian zeal has removed it to the Greek chapel in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where at the great feasts it is kissed by thousands of devout pilgrims.

[2] Matt. 5: 8.

them from the hand of their god, Chemosh or Melkart or Bel; in these things they differed not at all from Israel. Did David long to build a house for the God who had "given him rest from all his enemies round about"?[3] Mesha, king of Moab, the contemporary of Ahab, inscribes on his monument, discovered hardly forty years ago,[4] "I have made this high place to Chemosh . . . . for he saved me from all the kings." Did Samuel hew Agag in pieces before Jehovah?[5] "I slew all the inhabitants of the city," says Mesha; "a delightful sight to Chemosh." Did Jehovah say to Saul, "Go and smite Amelek"?[6] The Moabite Stone tells how "Chemosh said (to Mesha), 'Go and take Nebo from Israel,'" and again, "Go and make war on Horonaim," an Israelite city. It was not in being religious that Israel differed from other nations, but in the character of his God. Bel and Chemosh had no more moral character than Apollo and Aphrodite, and Thor and Freya. But Jehovah was good in the moral sense of the word; he was a righteous God. What made Israel different from other peoples was his profound belief that eternal righteousness ruled the world.

It was this, as Matthew Arnold says, that made

[3] 2 Sam. 7: 2.
[4] In 1868.
[5] 1 Sam. 15: 33.
[6] 1 Sam. 15: 3.

Abraham differ from the highly religious Chaldeans, from among whom he was called out: he dared to demand *justice* of his God. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth *do right?*"[7] If, as Professor Toy says, "the religious system of a people expresses its attempt to construe the world in accordance with its highest instincts," what must it have been to the world to have had, through long ages, in the very center of its active life, a people who construed the world as related in all its functions to a God of ever deeper and more comprehensive moral character![8] The thought lends interest to every clue we have to Israel's relations with the nations. Great portions of the Bible, which had seemed obscure and unimportant, spring up at once into high relief, and take on living interest. The burden of Tyre,[9] the burden of Nineveh,[10] the burden of the desert of the sea,[11] begin to mean something when we find that these peoples and places have their part, too, in the development of God's great thought for the salvation of man.

The volume which, by a central idea like this,

[7] Gen. 18: 25.

[8] "That Jehovah's relation to Israel is not natural but ethical is the doctrine of the prophets, and is emphasized, in dependence on their teaching, in the book of Deuteronomy. But . . . the idea has its foundation in pre-prophetic times; and indeed the prophets, though they give it fresh and powerful application, plainly do not regard the conception as an innovation."— W. Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 319, note.

[9] Isa. 23: 1. [10] Nah. 1: 1. [11] Isa. 21: 1.

brings into unity the story of the whole world's life surely demands a larger study than the purely devotional reading which is all that most of those who read it at all give to it. For it is manifestly more than a revelation of God to the individual soul, more than a system of belief, more than a law of life. It gives the key to human history, showing its secret to be the converse of God with man. Without question, the book which shows this truth is a far larger book than most people who read it have realized. And yet to most of those who read the Bible daily it is gradually becoming a smaller and smaller book. Not less precious; far otherwise, no doubt. The light of day was not less precious to the man of whom we read in the tragic story of the " Iron Shroud," who day after day saw the walls of his prison closing in upon him, and shutting out one by one the windows that opened between him and the sun. At first he did not notice the narrowing area of his chamber; and perhaps my readers are now reflecting for the first time that, as the years go on, they read the same portions of the Bible more frequently, going over and over again their favorite psalms and chapters, making fewer excursions into the unfamiliar fields of history and prophecy and wisdom and law.

They are hardly better off who have learned to see spiritual lessons applicable to themselves in

all parts of the Bible — in every record of God's dealings with men in history, and in every psalm, prophecy, and proverb. Reading the Bible in this subjective way, with self as the center of importance, they have so far gained as to have been able to find that the driest and least profitable passages may have their gleams of interest; as when the story of Jabez flashes out like a precious jewel from the midst of a dull genealogical record.[12] It is easy to make a personal application of this exquisite little story, with its half-revelation of pathos and patience; and where the reader finds no such helps over hard places, he manages to make his reading "profitable" by means of the double sense, the figurative or typical application of it to his own inner history.

But granting that this is a legitimate use of the Word of God, what a belittling of a volume which brings to light the most sublime of all truths, thus to whittle it down to fit individual needs! A somewhat over-brilliant essayist of recent years has said that, though we have accepted the Copernican system of astronomy, yet in our philosophy of life we are still Ptolemaic — ourselves the center of our universe. This is certainly the case with regard to the Bible study of most people; and they miss more than they are aware by thus making their own personality the

[12] 1 Chron. 4: 9, 10.

center of the Bible, and listening merely for the voice of God to their own souls. We cannot learn to know God by discovering what he is to ourselves alone; it is not until we learn something of what he is to the world that we begin to know him. To assume a double significance for every passage of which the obvious meaning has no application to oneself, seeking therein for the cipher that tells one's own inner history, is like the way certain people study Shakespeare, finding in it the cipher in which Bacon wrote his own story; only the loss of all that is large and central and universal is incomparably greater.

It is true that we have the authority of the church fathers for the allegorical interpretation. They laid down the principle that everything in Scripture which, taken in its natural sense, appears unedifying, must be made edifying by some method of typical or figurative application; and Origen carried this principle so far as to teach that the literal sense of Scripture is often designedly impossible, absurd, or immoral; lest, cleaving to the letter alone, men should remain at a distance from the dogmata, and learn nothing worthy of God. But the Fathers lived in a day when history had not become a science, when the Hebrew language had not been revived from the dead by comparative philology, and when the comparative study of religions had not yet begun

to illumine the pages of the Bible. No Bible reader of today would accept Origen's view in this particular; but all do not perceive with equal clearness that, unless they accept some such principle as he lays down, they have only two alternatives: either to find the greater half of the Bible meaningless, or else to search for its meaning by the same methods by which men search for the meaning of other written things.

When we come to think carefully on the subject of biblical interpretation, we see that it is as dishonoring to God to put a meaning into his inspired Word which is not naturally there, as it is impertinent to do what some eminent theologians, and a great many less eminent people, are continually doing — attempt to "reconcile" statements that appear to be contradictory. It is not faith, but presumption, which impels us to explain away anything in the Bible, or try to fit it to a standard not its own; even though that standard be what we deem truth. For we know only in part; and yet even we know that truth is something other than verbal accuracy. What we need is the open mind, willing at whatever cost to know the truth. Our first question must indeed be simply: What does the Old Testament *say?* And to this question the answer must be found by the method by which we can ascertain what any book says. When we have seen what

it says, we are ready to ask: What does it *mean?* We usually go to work the other way. We think we know pretty well what it must mean, and so we devote our energies to making what it says correspond with that.

II

The explanation of this mistake, which still remains almost universal, notwithstanding many recent efforts to correct it, is to be found in the fact that people generally do not concern themselves with the literary character of the Old Testament. Not only at divers times but in divers manners, divers literary forms — narrative, proverb, prophecy, psalm, parable, epistle — has God spoken to the world. There is always a reason for the form of every work of literature worthy of the name. Thought creates its own form; the thought of God for man, that revelation of his gracious purpose, that inner history of his converse with mankind, which we have in the Old Testament, must, in the very nature of thought, have revealed its various phases in various forms. To discern the force and meaning of these forms, their relation to the idea, is a duty pressing upon all devout Bible readers.

A large portion of the perplexities awakened by reading the Old Testament, especially the supposed need of "reconciling" conflicting historic

statements, vanish when one discovers the literary class to which these statements belong, and traces the relation of the form to the idea which made it so. Nothing is more evident to any student of the books of the Bible which are called historical than that fact *as fact* is everywhere of minor importance to the writers. Let anyone read straight through at a sitting the book of Judges, for example. It is full of stirring incidents, of marvelous deeds; but it is not these that will stick in the memory as one closes the book, but rather the ever-recurring words, resounding in his ears like the ceaseless roll of the waves upon the seashore: "The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord . . . . and the Lord delivered them into the hands of their enemies . . . . then they cried unto the Lord . . . . and he raised them up a Saviour." [18] That is, the purpose of this book appears to be what theologians call a pragmatic purpose — or what, from the present point of view, may be called an ideal purpose: to teach, not history, but the nature of the dealings of God with Israel; to bring to light, that is, by means of a fragmentary record of events, such as one puts down in a diary, the method of God's inner converse with man.

If the books which we call historic are not

[18] Judg. 2: 11, 14, 16; 3: 7, 9; 4: 2, 3, 4 ff., etc.

that in the ordinary sense of the word, what then are they? The Jews call them prophecy. They divide the Old Testament into the Law, the Prophets, and the Sacred Writings, and all that lies between the Pentateuch and Esther they include in prophecy. Yet nothing is more evident than the essential difference between the books generally classed as history and those which are known as prophecy. Precisely what is the difference between them is a literary question of intense interest, to which I can here give only a clue by pointing out that, however far-reaching might be the meaning of prophecy, its first purpose must have been, in the nature of things, to interpret passing events to the men who were experiencing them, so that they might see God in them, and discern in some degree his gracious purpose. With a self-consciousness which would be almost sublime, were it not so pitifully blinding, Christian readers of the Old Testament have long assumed that the prophecies were written for themselves, to furnish them a proof of the truth of revelation by the fact that the prophecies have been fulfilled. But it is evident that this could hardly have been the view of those to whom the prophecies were given. They, the Hebrew contemporaries of the prophets, must have supposed that these prophetic utterances concerned themselves, and were intended as a revelation to

them of God's gracious purpose. The historic books have in general the same purpose, but they were written, not only or not always for the actors in the events, but also for a later generation, and with a view to historic record. Yet is their purpose none the less prophetic: to reveal God and show him active in history; although from their literary character prophetic significance is found not so much in the interpretation of events as in their general scope and trend.[14]

III

If, then, the historical books of the Old Testament are not prophecy, and yet, strictly speaking, are not history in the ordinary acceptance of the word, what are they?

Thoughtful reading makes one fact increasingly evident, namely, that imagination had a part in the writing of these books. The more we study them, the more we feel that poetry is latent all through them. This is not to say that there is untruth in them. The proverbial antithesis between truth and poetry is a mischievous mistake. Imagination, poetry, is a necessary element of truth. The antithesis does not lie between truth

[14] These remarks do not apply to the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah. They are practically one work, written, not from the prophetic, but from the priestly standpoint, and cover the history of Judah from Adam (in whom, from this point of view, it potentially began) to the latest event recorded, 432 B. C.

and poetry, but it often does lie between truth and scientific statement, which fails of accuracy precisely from lack of poetry. As Matthew Arnold pointed out, it is more accurate to describe God as "the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity" than to say that he is "the moral and intelligent governor of the universe," though the latter is a scientific statement of fact, and the former is poetry. More than half the supposed oppositions between the Bible and science arise from the lack of poetic instinct in scientist and theologian alike. If the theologians of the Latin church had been aware of the fact that certain parts of the Old Testament were poetry, they would probably not have condemned Galileo for teaching that the world moves, in blasphemous contradiction, as they supposed, to the biblical statement that the Lord has set the world upon pillars,[15] and again that he has so established it that it cannot be moved.[16]

When we look at the historical books of the Old Testament from the true — that is, the poetic — standpoint, we perceive in a moment that they are not history in our modern understanding of the word "history," but answer more nearly to our idea of epic — the great world-epic of the dealings of God with men. Let me define an epic as an imaginative and poetic narrative of mem-

[15] 1 Sam. 2: 8. [16] Ps. 96: 10.

orable things, always with appeal to the religious instinct, and it becomes clear that this precisely describes the historical narratives of the Bible. We shall learn more later about this epic method; but here we may properly pause to observe that, just as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* give us that sense of familiarity with Greek civilization which makes the history of Greece potent as the interpreter of human institutions and human thought, so the Bible epic is of importance in giving a large setting, a human environment, to spiritual truth. We should take into consideration that our only knowledge of the conditions under which the divine revelation first came is from these so-called historic books. When we come to New Testament times, we have an immense background and environment of secular history and literature, and therefore the revelation of New Testament truth is given in most condensed and concrete form. It was not so in Old Testament times; and it is a very suggestive fact that the sacred history becomes less full, and finally ceases altogether at about the time when profane history and literature came in to supply its place as a background — the time of Cyrus and the beginning of Greek supremacy.

IV

Beginning, then, to study the Bible as literature, the first question must be as to the way in which it was written — the human element. We are not studying the question of inspiration; let me here assure my readers that no one can study the literature of the Bible without coming to the profound conviction that it is inspired. But we must remember that inspiration is not necessarily given by means of a book. God can speak to the human heart by any means. He spoke to men long before ever a book was made, and we have no means of knowing whether he spoke in words or not; but we know that he speaks to us, and that he does not speak in words. We may, if we like, say that God could have made a panorama of creation pass before Moses; though we have no reason to suppose that he did so. But, however Moses or anyone else received a divine revelation, he could pass the knowledge on only by means of words, and could make it permanently useful only by committing it to writing. Now, not to speak of the fact that language is continually growing and developing — is "fluid," as Matthew Arnold says — fitting itself into any mold, we must remember also that the art of literary composition, like the arts of painting and sculpture, has its mechanical side, and that its methods have greatly improved since the Old

Testament was written. Punctuation, for example, is a device far more modern than the latest Old Testament writer; so is the distinction between capitals and small letters, and even the device of spacing between words. Every great library contains old manuscripts in which the letters are solid, the words following close upon one another; and if our English Bible were thus printed, familiar as it is to most of us, we should probably find some difficulty in getting at its meaning. Practice enables scholars to read the old manuscripts, notwithstanding their lack of modern facilities, and there are very few errors in translation due to wrong divisions between words — though there are some due to wrong divisions between sentences.

The absence of quotation marks is a more serious difficulty, and it is certain that much of the obscurity of the prophets and psalms is due to the failure to perceive that certain passages are quoted, as uttered by God or by some person not the writer. In some cases this is evident, as in the magnificent psalm sung at the triumphal entry of the ark into the newly conquered city of Jerusalem.[17] Here the alternation of voices is plain — the priest approaching with the ark, crying:

[17] Ps. 24: 7, 10.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates!
Be lift up, ye doors of old,
That the King of Glory may come in!

and the warden answering from within:

Who is He, the King of Glory?

But there are other places where the proper setting of quotation marks throws a flood of light upon the passage. This is very strikingly the case in the Song of Solomon, and is of especial importance in prophetic passages. One attempting to read a copy of Shakespeare which made no division between the speeches, gave no name of speaker, no list even of the persons taking part, would find himself in much the same predicament as when reading the dramatic passages of the Old Testament as they are generally printed.

The translators perceived this difficulty in the case of the recapitulation of the work of the Levites, in 1 Chron. 23: 5, where "said David" is inserted by them; and still more interestingly in Ps. 27: 8, where, in the midst of an importunate prayer to Jehovah, occur the words "Seek ye my face," evidently spoken by God. The translators have very properly prefaced them with the words (not in the Hebrew) "When thou saidst." But there are few such instances,[18]

[18] See Lam. 2: 15; Job 9: 19 (R. V.).

and opportunities for some such treatment occur on nearly every page.

Many of the perplexities of the Old Testament arise from the want of such mechanical devices as the parenthesis, the footnote, and the appendix, none of which was known when the Old Testament was written. In the story of the Shunamite,[19] Elisha and Gehazi appear to carry on in the woman's presence a conversation which would more courteously have been carried on in her absence, and in fact was so, although the preceding verse says the woman stood before Elisha. In the verse that follows the conversation, indeed, Gehazi is told to call her, which is absurd if she was already there. If the writer had been familiar with the use of the parenthesis, this awkwardness, which is purely in the form of the narrative, would have been avoided; there is no real contradiction, but an interesting bit of evidence of the difficulty with which so simple a literary device as the parenthesis was wrought out. In 2 Kings 5 : 2 the explanation how the wife of Naaman, the Syrian, came to have a Hebrew maidservant would have been put in a footnote, if the methods of writing in that day had admitted of such a device.

This question of structure is particularly important in view of what are called discrepancies.

[19] 2 Kings 4: 12–15.

For example, in the story of Jehu we have some statements which seem almost fatally contradictory until we understand the difficulty of literary mechanism in those times. In 2 Kings 10:30 Jehu is commended, although in the verses which precede and follow (29, 31) he is severely condemned: (Vs. 29) "Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them; to wit the golden calves that were in Bethel and that were in Dan. (Vs. 30) And the Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in their heart, the children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel. (Vs. 31) But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of Jehovah God of Israel with all his heart, for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, king of Israel, which made Israel to sin."

The three verses read like a continuous statement, but, as a matter of fact, only one belongs to the narrative; the others are observations added by the historian, long after Jehu's death, reviewing his career as a whole. It was simply impossible, with the existing facilities for bookmaking, for him to put his own reflections in an appendix at the end of the book, as a modern historian would do.

Although the mechanical devices with which we are so familiar were unknown to the Hebrew writers, they also had their literary devices, which are quite as important as a basis for interpretation. Chief among them perhaps is parallelism, which is a cardinal factor in poetic construction, though it is not confined to poetry. It was in the genius of Hebrew utterance to fall into parallelism in moments of deep feeling, when all language takes on a semi-poetic form. Our Savior often spoke in parallels: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly."[20] "They [the sheep] shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand."[21] In parallelism the second line usually does not state a new proposition, but amplifies or extends or completes that of the first. Much faulty exegesis is due to an oversight of this principle; for example, a great deal of scorn has been poured forth by scoffers, and much apology used to be wasted by expositors, on the statement that Christ entered Jerusalem riding on an ass *and* a colt.[22] Profane levity amused itself with imaginary pictures of our Lord bestriding two animals at once, and devout literature did its best to blur over the picture. Nothing of the kind is needed to those who understand the genius of Hebrew literature (as we all may if we read our

[20] John 10: 10. [21] John 10: 28.

English Bible intelligently); for those who do, know that the second line states more definitely what was stated in the first: He rode on an ass; yes, it was a colt, an ass's foal; a fact important from the Hebrew point of view of the consecration of unused things to divine purposes.

From parallelism we might go on to proverb, and find that the Hebrew fondness for this form of teaching often gives a new canon of interpretation; and so through all the literary forms — parable, love song, sonnet, drama, philosophy. But there is room here only to consider the enormous influence upon popular culture and refinement which this method of Bible study would exert. The Authorized Version of the Bible is the finest work of literature in the English language, and perhaps in any language. It includes nearly every known literary form; it abounds in passion and pathos, in humor, sarcasm, playfulness, proverb, by-word; it pictures early manners and customs with a fidelity which admits of no question; its thoughts are incomparably noble, its diction of a grand simplicity and naturalness, its ruling idea an idea almost inconceivably great. A nation that has the Bible in every hotel bedroom, in the saloon of every steamer, ought to be the most cultivated nation in the world.

All men of great literary achievement have

[22] Matt. 21: 5.

been students of the Bible. The free-thinking Shelley's poetry and prose are full of it. One short paragraph in his *Defence of Poetry* has no less than seven biblical allusions. Shakespeare and Raleigh, Burke and Southey, Newman and Saintsbury, Longfellow and Browning, Thomas Hardy and Stevenson, are fairly saturated with the language, the thoughts, the tropes and figures of the Bible. Ruskin attributes all the warmth and color of his style to his having been obliged in his boyhood to read aloud with his mother once every year the entire Bible, and to commit to memory many of its noblest chapters. The statesman Bright made striking use of the death of the first-born of Egypt in a memorable speech in the House of Commons during the Crimean War. Southey makes fine use of Elijah's chariot of fire in his passage on the death of Nelson. And who can read without a thrill the use by Dickens, at the death of Sydney Carton, of the passage, " I am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord "?

The Bible has molded the style of all our greatest writers, and it is even yet the strongest counteracting force against the degenerating influence upon English style of the rapid writing and careless reading of the present day. One can hardly take up a book or serious magazine article without finding allusions to the Bible on

every page. An interesting article on the political situation in England, written not by a literary man, but by a professional statesman, contained more than a dozen biblical allusions, and the article owed its fine literary character almost entirely to the writer's familiarity with the Old Testament. The same discovery may be made in almost any work of literature, if the reader is sufficiently familiar with the Bible to detect the allusions to it. But precisely here is the difficulty. Few young people of today have a verbal acquaintance with the Old Testament, and it will soon become necessary to edit all our greatest writers, even such novelists as Hardy and Stevenson, with explanations of the biblical allusions.

We consider it a point of education to make our children familiar with the mythology of Greece and Rome, of the Norse folk and the old Germans, chiefly that they may understand what they read. We deem that man uncultured who does not recognize quotations from the classics, or is not able to make them at need. Here is the greatest classic of all time. Let us study it as we would study any classic, that we may be able to wring from it its fullest meaning. Goethe says:

> I am convinced that the Bible becomes ever more beautiful the more one understands it; that is, the more

one gets insight to see that every word which we take generally and make special application of to our own wants has had, in connection with certain circumstances, with certain relations of time and place, a peculiar direct individual reference of its own.

And if, indeed, this classic is, as most of us believe, inspired by God in a sense in which no other book is inspired, if in it we find the history of his converse with the sons of men in the form in which he has chosen to give it to us, then no study is amiss which gives the clue to its half-hints, which brings light to its obscurities, and shows its true character, as the diary of the converse of heaven with earth, the day-book of the Eternal God.

CHAPTER II

FOLKLORE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

I

In that impressive book, *A Study of Death*,[1] the author strikingly points out the childlike character of the Hebrew people. The most prominent characteristics of the "children of Israel" were those of childhood. They had the intense feeling, the spontaneity and absence of self-consciousness, which are so charming in childhood; like children, they were acutely susceptible to the delights of the senses; they loved good food, perfumes, the dance, and music; they delighted in jewels and gorgeous apparel; the splendor of a goodly Babylonish garment lured Achan to ruin,[2] and with savory meat blind Isaac was beguiled.[3] Jacob thought it a high blessing for Judah that

> He hath washed in wine his raiment,
> And in the blood of the grape his vesture.
> Heavy in the eyes from wine
> And white of teeth from milk;[4]

[1] Henry Mills Alden, *A Study of Death* (Harpers, 1895), pp. 214–42 *passim*.

[2] Josh. 7: 21.

[3] Gen. 27: 1–3, 6–14, 18–23.

[4] Gen. 49: 11, 12.

and for Asher that

> His bread is fat
> And he yieldeth the dainties of a king.[5]

Yet with all this joy of sensation, sensuality was no more a Hebrew vice than it is a vice of childhood. As in all childlike natures, delight in the sensible world was closely associated with high spiritual exaltation, and it was because this childhood was perennial, lasting on through generation after generation, that the spiritual capacity of this people became so deep. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy;" to the Hebrew it was ever close at hand. It was no strange thing to him that messengers of God came and went familiarly between earth and that near sky in which God dwelt, like the shepherd who guards his sheep,[6] spreading out the heaven as a tent above him.[7] The Hebrew had no more conception of the orderly development of events than the child has, and therefore he received the miraculous interventions of God in his daily life as a child takes its father's gifts, not as evidence of his existence and credibility, but as witness to his tender preoccupation in the well-being of his child. The entire history of Israel, as Mr. Alden says,[8] foreshadowed the principle which the life of Jesus illustrated, and which he laid down as the cardi-

[5] Gen. 49: 20.
[6] Judg. 6: 11–16; 13: 2–9.
[7] Ps. 104: 2.
[8] *Op. cit.*, p. 237.

nal principle of his kingdom: that he who does not become as a little child cannot enter therein.[9]

Perhaps it was because of this childlike artlessness that this people, living in the midst of nations each of which had its own supreme god, and entirely ready to admit the reality of the great gods of other nations and their power, on their own territory, yet dared to set up the God of their small and obscure nation as the one sovereign God, to whom sooner or later all the gods of the nations must bow. Surely it was only by the fearless faith of childhood that, surrounded as they were by intellectual peoples that were deeply perplexed with the problems of the world, Israel was able, without deep intellectual processes, to live out, as has been said, a religion "which not only undertook to explain the past, but claimed the future as its own," and with the artless daring of a child "was sublimely confident that the greatest forces of the world were working for its ends." This spirit of childhood speaks in every page of the Old Testament. It is full of folklore, which is at once the wisdom and the recreation of children and immature peoples. Again and again this fact offers a clue to a puzzling passage in the Bible.

In the very nature of things, there must be folklore in the Old Testament. Before the in-

[9] Matt. 18: 3.

vention of writing, folklore was the only history and the only literature, if we may use the word for that which is not written. According to the ancient tradition of the church, devoutly accepted for hundreds of years, the narratives of Genesis were handed down orally from Adam to Methuselah, from Methuselah to Noah, from Noah to Terah, from Terah to Abraham, from Abraham to Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and so on down to Moses, who, under divine inspiration, committed them to writing; and though this view has necessarily been modified as men have come to know more about the growth of language, and the beginnings of the art of writing, yet something of this kind must have taken place.

And this is folklore — the narrative of events passed along from lip to lip down through the ages. Every nation in the world has it, and the comparative study of folklore, carried on of late years, shows that in fundamental ideas and in some formal characteristics the folklores of all peoples have much in common. But folklore is the product, not of memory alone, but of memory and imagination — that divine faculty of the child and the childlike. Much of the folklore of all peoples is cast in a more or less rude poetic form; not only because the imagination is peculiarly active among primitive and childlike peoples, but because even a rude recitative or ballad

aids the memory, and tends therefore to preserve the story which has no hope of preservation except in the memory.[10]

The discovery, made in comparatively recent years, that much of the narrative part of the Old Testament is poetry brings out as never before the use the inspired writers have made of old folklore. An illustration of it appears in the Revised Version of Gen. 4: 23, 24, the "Sword Song," in which Lamech proudly boasts that, whereas Cain had been fain to invoke the protection of divine vengeance, the inventions of his sons have put him above any such need, since he has a sword and can avenge himself:

> Adah and Zillah, hear my voice!
> Wives of Lamech, listen to my speech!
> I slay a man for wounding me,
> A youth for inflicting a stripe.
> Lo, Cain would be avenged twice seven-fold,
> But Lamech seventy-seven-fold.

The parallelism of this little poem is highly finished, and parallelism is one of the most obvious marks of Hebrew poetry. This had not been discovered when our Authorized Version was made, and in consequence the translation of this passage is obscure and confused; but the Revisers, recognizing that it was poetry, were able to put the passage into intelligible English. The

[10] The Babel story (Gen. 11: 1–9) is apparently based on an old ballad, fragments of which appear in vss. 3, 4, 7.

poem is a fragment of a ballad, and it gives us good reason to think that there were other ballads circulating among the people, recounting the exploits of the great men of old in the forcible and simple diction of all ballads.

A few pages later, in the curse of Canaan,[11] we observe the deep displeasure of Noah finding expression in the words, "And let Canaan be servant to him," twice repeated like a refrain, after having been made the motive of the poem. This is precisely the ballad style.

The Revisers have not observed that the divine promise to Noah after the flood [12] is also a poem, but it is, as Dr. Briggs pointed out; [13] and one can readily understand how carefulness for the preservation of the words of God would very early have caused this story to fall into poetic form; how, when Jehovah smelled the "odors of gratification," Noah's burnt-offering, Jehovah said *to his very soul:*

I will not again any more curse
The ground for man's sake,
Though the structure of the heart of man be evil from his youth.
And I will not again any more smite
All living things as I have done;
During all the days of the earth,

[11] Gen. 9: 25–27.
[12] Gen. 8: 21, 22.
[13] *Messianic Prophecy* (Scribners, 1902), p. 78.

Seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer
and winter,
And day and night shall not cease.

We may with reasonable probability find in these lines a fragment of an ancient ballad of the deluge — an event almost certain to have been handed down in poetic form.

It is strikingly evident, however, that the parallelism of this ballad, unlike that of the "Sword Song" of Lamech, is very slight. The poem is, in fact, a rude recitative, such as we find among our North American Indians and among all primitive peoples — the earliest attempts to please the ear and aid the memory by a rude balance of clauses. There is much of this rude recitative in the narrative books of the Old Testament, but it was not recognized as poetry even so recently as the time of the Revised Version.

The oracle concerning Rebekah's twin children, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Genesis, and Isaac's blessings of Jacob and of Esau in the twenty-seventh, are in poetry; and so is Isaac's blessing of Jacob when he sent him away; although the Revisers did not perceive this passage to be poetry:

May El Shadday bless thee,
And may he make thee fruitful, and may he multiply thee,
So that thou mayest become a congregation of people;
And may he give to thee the blessing of Abraham,
To thee and to thy seed with thee,

To inherit the land of thy sojourning,
Which God gave to Abraham.[14]

All along through the early books we find outcroppings of this old ballad lore. Much of it was gathered into written collections long before the books of the Bible were written. At least two of these works are mentioned in the books of Moses, and must therefore be older than those books: the Book of the Wars of Jehovah — that is, of Israel — and the Book of Jasher.[15]

The Book of the Wars of Jehovah must have contained some very ancient poems. A fragment of what was evidently a ballad of Israel's journey in the region east of Canaan [16] is so ancient that the first word, *Waheb,* has dropped out of the Hebrew vocabulary. The ballad appears to be giving a sort of itinerary of the journey, telling of the places passed through by the Israelitish caravan; among others

Waheb in Suphah [we passed]
And the valleys of Arnon
And the cliffs of the valleys

[14] Gen. 28: 3, 4.

[15] The Revised Version translates the latter "the Upright." The meaning of the word is not certain, but, so far as the contents of the book are known, it seems to be concerned with the valiant deeds of heroes, and it may perhaps be more adequately named "The Book of the Valiant." The word "may be taken as hero or heroes" (Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*). "The Book of the Righteous (or possibly Brave) One" (Cheyne, *Encyclopædia Biblica*). Both authorities refer to an Arabic anthology of similar character, called *Valor* or *Warlike Virtue.*

[16] Num. 21: 14, 15.

That descend to the dwellings of Ar,
And lean on the shoulder of Moab.

It would seem probable that the entire story of the wilderness journey and the conquest of the district east of Jordan was preserved in a series of ballads of this sort, perhaps for the same reason that the list of the kings of England has been cast into the doggerel verse, "First William the Norman," etc., and that Peter Parley taught the children of two generations ago the early history of this country in the rude ballad, "Columbus Was a Sailor Brave"— simply that the facts might be more easily remembered. The writer of the narrative in Numbers naturally made little use of such a poem, but this poetic description of the impressive scenery he could not leave out; nor could he omit the song, also attributed to the Book of the Wars of Jehovah, in which the digging of the "well of the heroes," Beer-elim, was celebrated; the strong contrast between this arduous digging and the free upspringing of the twelve fountains of Elim, and the miraculous outflow of Horeb, being full in his mind:

"Spring up, well!" sing ye to it! [but it did not spring up, it had to be digged; and so]
Which the princes digged,
Which the nobles of the people delved,
With their scepters, with their staves.[17]

[17] Num. 21: 17, 18.

The importance of the recognition that passages like these are poetry, not prose, ancient folklore, not history, is very great, especially in doing away with difficulties. For example, the story of Joshua's victory at Beth-horon.[18] That noble record of a great victory presents difficulties to the most devout believer; not more to him who finds all miracles impossible than to him who finds it a perfectly rational thing that God should make special intervention, out of the ordinary course of nature, in behalf of the race upon whom the well-being of all humanity depended. Whatever the future may have to teach us, it is certain that, in the present stage of scientific knowledge — that is, of acquaintance with the methods in which God reveals his rule over the physical universe — the intelligent mind absolutely cannot picture to itself such an event as the sun standing still — that is to say, the earth ceasing its rotation — for a single moment of time. To ask any thinking person to believe that it happened, on the authority of the Bible, is to subject faith to a very severe test; and therefore we find commentators putting all sorts of forced interpretations on the words to explain away their obvious meaning. We will not ask if it is honest to juggle with words in the Bible as we would certainly not think of doing if we found them in any other

[18] Josh. 10: 10–14.

book, but will simply inquire whether the words really do put this strain upon the believer's faith.

When we turn to the narrative in the Revised Version, we perceive that the account of the event is a fragment of poetry quoted from the Book of Jasher, and probably a stanza from a ballad recounting the valiant deeds of Joshua:

"Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon
And thou Moon in the valley Ajalon!"
So the sun stood still and the moon stayed
Until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies.[19]

Statements of this kind are perfectly legitimate in poetry. The Old Testament furnishes many analogous instances. Jeremiah tells us that the invasion of the Scythians caused all the hills to move to and fro.[20] A psalmist says that the mountains skipped like rams and the little hills like lambs,[21] but no one has ever thought that this actually happened. The Song of Deborah says that the stars in their courses fought against Sisera,[22] but no one has ever taken this statement literally; from the first it has been recognized as poetic. How does it differ in literary character from the statement in Joshua? The historic interpretation put upon it is, indeed, very different; but this, it seems to me, is because that has

[19] Vss. 12, 13.
[20] Jer. 4: 24.
[21] Ps. 114: 4.
[22] Judg. 5: 20.

been taken to be history which is in fact literature. Turning again to the story in Joshua, we observe that in the prose which follows the poetry we read that the Lord hearkened to the prayer of Joshua, and that he fought for Israel by a hailstorm;[23] but we do not read that the sun stood still; simply that it did not go down until after the victory; in other words, that Joshua's prayer was answered by victory being achieved before nightfall.

III

Much of Old Testament folklore, however, is not poetry, but prose. Let us recall to mind the various sorts of folklore with which we are familiar — the dear old Perrault's fairy-tales, the lovely Northern folklore that Grimm and Hans Andersen have given us, and the *Persian Tales* and the *Arabian Nights*. It is especially useful for Bible students of the West to know the *Arabian Nights*, for they are from the very country and the very race from which we have our Old Testament stories, and they give a more valuable key to the Old Testament, the customs and modes of thought of the Hebrew people, which underlie its spiritual teachings, than any other work in the English language. Professor Stowe, in his celebrated Introduction to Bishop Lowth's gre[illegible] work on prophecy, for a century the mos[illegible]

[23] Josh. 10: 14, cf. vs. 11.

thoritative work on that subject in any language, observes that, whatever are the deficiencies of the book, they are all due to the author's ignorance of oriental literature. As the readiest way to avoid such deficiencies, a celebrated professor of biblical theology advises his students to read the *Arabian Nights* through once every year.[24]

It is hardly necessary to point out that the very existence of folklore depends upon the memory of the people who have it; but a slight consideration of this fact brings out the reason for the somewhat mechanical structure upon which the prose folklore of every people is built. It is always in the interest of accuracy, that the memory may preserve what there is no paper and ink to retain. We find a very zealous care for aiding the memory in the lists of names which so often occur in the Bible, and which are almost always grouped in sevens or tens, or a multiple of seven or ten. In the first chapter of Matthew we are expressly told that there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile, and fourteen from the exile to Christ;

[24] This, however, not in any of the recent translations, such as that of Mr. Andrew Lang, which are exquisite works of English literature, but hardly at all a key to oriental literature or thought. The invaluable translation of Lane, in three octavo volumes, fully illustrated and furnished with admirable notes, is by itself almost a liberal education in oriental ideas and customs. Happy is the Bible student whose daily and nightly companion in childhood was this important and fascinating work.

but reference to the Old Testament [25] shows that there are a good many more than this, and that in Matthew a number of names are left out. The important thing in the writer's mind was to aid the memory by using a common unit, not to preserve historic accuracy, which was little cared for in those days. Just as we lately saw that historic fact is held in the Bible as of small moment compared with the religious meaning of fact, so we here see that it was held as of little moment compared with accuracy in remembering and transmitting the common heritage of knowledge.

This explains the mechanical structure of the folklore of all peoples. Everything is in threes or sevens: three sisters, three knights in armor, three royal mendicants, Sindbad's seven voyages, the barber's seven brothers; every stratagem is thrice repeated, the heroine or the dragon or the giant being nothing daunted by a first and second failure; and every question is put three times over, though the second and third answer carry one no farther than the first. Southey made charming use of this old folklore style in his classic story of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears": "Who's been eating *my* soup?" "Who's been sitting in *my* chair?" "Who's been sleeping in *my* bed?" repeated in turn by

[25] 1 Chron., chaps. 2, 3.

the Great Big Bear and the Mother Bear and the Tiny Little Bear.

When we read the Bible with stories like this in mind, we become very much impressed to find how many of its narratives are cast in the same mold. Three times over Balaam has seven altars built, and offers thereon seven bullocks and seven rams;[26] Samson[27] performed seven prodigious exploits; in one of them he destroys the Philistines' standing corn with three hundred foxes;[28] three times he gives Delilah a false answer to her thrice-repeated question: "Tell me, I pray thee, wherewith thou mightest be bound?" Three times she has liers-in-wait abiding in the inner chamber, and challenges Samson in the selfsame words: "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" This story has been grossly misapprehended by nearly all commentators, for want of appreciation of the literary form of the narrative. It has been held to be a proof of Samson's brutish stupidity, and so the incomparably valuable meaning of the Samson story has been overclouded. The reason for the form of this episode is the reason for the poetic form of the ballad, the necessity not only for remembering, but for accuracy. Where nothing was fixed in print, the only way of insuring accuracy in a narrative was

[26] Num., chaps. 22–24.
[27] Judg., chaps. 14–16.
[28] Judg. 15:4.

by casting it into a form which would be its own safeguard against alteration. It was far more important that the story should not be corrupted by the additions or the interpretations of the ignorant, as it was handed down from generation to generation, than that in its first telling the minor details should literally accord with fact.

The clue to the Old Testament narratives that we have here is really very important; nowhere more so perhaps than in the story of Elijah, which bears every mark of being genuine folklore, and having been handed down by word of mouth for generations. The inspired perspicacity of the author, or, more properly, compiler, of the book of Kings is nowhere more strikingly shown than in his not choosing the materials for the Elijah story from the annals of the kingdom, to which he so often refers in the book of Kings; for from first to last Elijah was in opposition — the "enemy," as King Ahab said,[20] of the established order. Without a shadow of doubt, his story was garbled in the royal annals. The writer of the book of Kings recognized this, and went for his material to the homes of the people, perfectly sure that, however much it might have been idealized in passing down from lip to lip through

[20] 1 Kings 21: 20.

nearly two hundred years, it had still, by that very process, been kept essentially true.[30]

Let us look at the chapter which tells of Elijah's translation.[31] Three times he tells Elisha: "Tarry here, I pray thee, for Jehovah hath sent me to Bethel, to Jericho, to Jordan." Three times Elisha answers: "As Jehovah liveth and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee." Twice the sons of the prophets say: "Knowest thou that Jehovah will take away thy master from thy head today?" and twice he answers: "Yea, I also know it, hold ye your peace." It is important that we should recognize that Elijah's story was for a long time a true folk-tale, told among the people for generations before it was included in the book of Kings, because to read it thus is to find a simple answer to many questions which commentators have found very perplexing.

Let us take, for example, the nineteenth chapter of First Kings, observing that the framework in the early part of the story is founded on twos instead of threes, as indeed is often the case in folklore. The note of folklore is struck at once in the language of the opening verses, with the

[30] Elijah's story might, indeed, have been committed to writing by one of the prophets whom the compiler mentions among his authorities. The style, however, proves conclusively that this was not the case. It is not prophetic, and it is precisely the style of folklore.

[31] 2 Kings, chap. 2.

proverbial expressions, "slain all the prophets with the sword;" "So let the gods do to me and more also;" "I am not better than my fathers." Then follows the twice-repeated sleep, and the twice-repeated call of the angel: "Arise and eat." Next we find the prophet in a cave on Horeb, the sacred mount, and the word of the Lord comes to him: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" And he answers: "I have been very jealous for Jehovah, the God of Hosts, for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away." A second time the same question is asked and the same answer given, without the change of a syllable, although under circumstances so different that commentators have been appalled to find the prophet learning nothing by the tremendous experience that has come to him between the first and second putting of the question, and have shed gallons of ink over reams of paper in the vain attempt to explain it. For between the two questions Elijah has had a vision of God, and heard a still small voice that would, we should say, speak new wisdom to him who heard. But when we study the description of this vision, the threefold manifestation of the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, in all of which Jehovah was

not, before the voice came in which he *was,* then we understand that the preservation of this marvelous story in the mechanical form of folklore alone insured that not one syllable of its tremendous meaning should ever be lost or altered. In face of the new revelation of God's character and watch over Israel which the story of this chapter gives, it is of trifling importance what Elijah did or did not say. The important thing was that the revelation of God — an absolutely new addition to the conception of Jehovah as it had been in the Hebrew mind — should not have been corrupted or changed during the generations before the story was imperishably fixed on the written page.

IV

The Protean forms which Hebrew folklore takes on give striking witness to that artless childlikeness of this people which we have before observed. There is more of the spontaneity of childhood in our Bible stories than in the folklore of any other people. Folk-songs and tales and heroic legends by no means exhaust its amazing variety. There is the fable pure and simple, with a shrewd meaning of its own, such as Jotham told to the men of Shechem [82] — the story how the trees sought them a king, and could find none but the useless bramble willing to take up so profit-

[82] Judg. 9: 8–15.

less a calling; there is the proverb, or by-word — "As sure as Tabor is among the mountains and Carmel by the sea;" [33] there is the riddle, such as Samson gave to the Philistines,[34] such as God bade Ezekiel put to the exiled Israelites,[35] such as the queen of Sheba came to prove Solomon with.[36] We are not told that any of her riddles have been preserved; but they must have been of the same character as some in the book of Proverbs, those interesting "number riddles" which we do not recognize as riddles because, of necessity, on committing them to writing, the answers were immediately appended. The riddle of "things not to be known," [37]

> There be three things which are too wonderful for me,
> Yea, four which I know not;

the riddle of "things not to be borne," [38]

> For three things the earth doth tremble
> And for four which it cannot bear;

and that of "things never satisfied," [39]

> There are three things that are never satisfied,
> Yea, four that say not, Enough,

may have been first put by the queen of Sheba to Solomon. It would need the wisdom of Solo-

[33] Jer. 46: 18.
[34] Judg. 14: 14.
[35] Ezek. 17: 1–8.
[36] 1 Kings 10: 1.
[37] Prov. 30: 18.
[38] Prov. 30: 21.
[39] Prov. 30: 15.

mon to discover their meaning if the answers did not immediately follow them.

As for proverbs and proverbial sayings, the Old Testament fairly bristles with them. We have found them already in the Elijah story. Gideon appeased the Ephraimites, displeased at not having been earlier summoned to war against Midian, by adapting one to their case: "Is not the gleaning of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abi-ezer?"[40] Rehoboam answered the assembly of Israel with a proverb: "My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins;"[41] which reminds us of our own proverb: "He knows more in his little finger than another in his whole body." David quoted "the proverb of the ancients" in his remonstrance with Saul.[42] Jephthah makes much use of proverbs and proverbial expressions: "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord;" "I have taken my life in my hand."[43] The prophets abound in them: "As with the people so with the priest;"[44] "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge;"[45] "As sure as Tabor is among the mountains and Carmel by the sea." We remember our Lord quoting the popular proverb: "Physician, heal thyself."[46] In fact,

[40] Judg. 8: 2.
[41] 1 Kings 12: 10.
[42] 1 Sam. 24: 13.
[43] Judg. 11: 35; 12: 3.
[44] Isa. 24: 2.
[45] Jer. 31: 29; Ezek. 18: 2.
[46] Luke 4: 23.

he quotes a number of proverbs as a careful reading shows.

Proverbs of this kind are not at all to be confounded with those sententious aphorisms and moral epigrams which we find in the book of Proverbs, embodying the worldly philosophy of the Hebrews at a later time. Those here quoted are genuine folklore, and a recognition of this fact often furnishes a valuable canon of interpretation even in the New Testament.

V

A strong characteristic of Hebrew folklore, throwing an interesting light upon Hebrew character, is its sarcasm. Jotham's fable about the trees is a fine bit of sarcasm; and so, with all its tenderness, is the fable the prophet Nathan told David about the poor man and his one ewe lamb.[47] There is a fine sarcasm in the reply of the father of Gideon to those who charged his son with sacrilege for throwing down the altar of Baal and building one to Jehovah: "Will ye take upon yourselves to plead Baal's cause? Let Baal plead for himself."[48] If he is a god, he is his own witness. Centuries later Elijah speaks in the same sarcastic vein where he urges the priests of Baal to "cry aloud — for he *is* a god: either he is musing or he is gone aside or he is in a journey,

[47] 2 Sam. 12: 1–4. [48] Judg. 6: 31.

or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked." [49] The satire is very biting where the prophet Zechariah foretells the selling of our Lord for thirty pieces of silver: "the glorious price at which I was valued of them" [50]— the price of a maid-servant.[50]

The classic expression of Hebrew sarcasm is found in their "taunt-songs," such as the one with which, after the death of Sihon, king of the Amorites, Israel challenged him to come back and rebuild his city, Heshbon.[51] This poem, we are told, circulated widely among "them that speak in proverbs," the Moshelîm — a word more correctly translated as "the reciters of sarcastic verses." These satirists appear to have been as important a class among Israel as the minstrels of ancient Britain or the *improvisatori* of Italy.

This taunt-song to Sihon mockingly dares him to retake the capital he has lost:

> Come ye to Heshbon!
> Let the city of Sihon be built and set up again.

Sihon had been before able to conquer Moab; is it possible that he cannot retake his own city?

So Psalm 126 tells how, when the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, the mouth of Israel was filled with laughter — not of gayety, but of

[49] 1 Kings 18: 27.
[50] Zech. 11: 13; Lev. 27: 4.
[51] Num. 21: 27–30.

scorn, "the laughter of Truth's scorn upon the idols of their conquerors." And the study of the prophets shows how effective a weapon against the tendency of Israel to idolatry the prophets found in satire.

VI

The child-spirit of Israel is most of all evident in the humor which, probably to the student's great surprise, he will find shimmering over many pages of the Old Testament, when once he begins to look for it. Samson, the Sunny, is full of humor, with his riddles and his repartees, his practical jokes and his puns. The humor of Gideon is somewhat grim, or perhaps of Gideon's historian, where he tells [52] how that hero "taught the men of Succoth" better manners than to refuse him help in time of need, by thrashing them with thorns and briars. The story of Micah, in the seventeenth and eighteenth chapters of Judges, is one of the most charmingly quaint and artlessly humorous stories in all literature; and a good deal may be learned from it, not only of the religious ideas and customs of the time of the judges (this is evidently the reason why the story is appended to the book), but as to the mental attitude in which we should approach the narratives of the Old Testament.

It is not easy for us to appreciate the puns of

[52] Judg. 8: 16.

the Old Testament, as nothing more quickly loses its flavor in translation than a pun, but there are a surprising number of them. The pun appears to have been as greatly relished by the Hebrews of ancient days as it is by Arabic-speaking folk today. There are a number of very satirical plays upon names in the genealogical lists, as Hebrew scholars are almost daily discovering, making these once dry chapters very amusing reading to those who can detect these puns.

The jawbone episode in the story of Samson shows the most artless delight in this form of humor. The incident occurred at a place called Lehi.[53] Now, *lehi* means "jaw;" and the rapture of Samson in ringing the changes upon the word is very evident, even to his calling the place in the end "Mount Jawbone" (*Ramath lehi*). The story tells how the hero thirsted, and God miraculously provided a fountain for him, which sprang up in a hollow — not of *lehi*, the jawbone, but of Lehi the hill. The translators of King James's version, who, with all their gifts, were entirely without the Hebrew sense of humor, and who seemed always to think that the more difficult a thing would be for *them* to do, the greater the honor to God when he does it, preferred to give the grotesque picture of a fountain perennially gushing out of a jawbone, though even

[53] Judg. 15: 9–14.

they had to leave it in Lehi the hill in the next verse. The Revisers have made the proper correction, and we find nothing of this in their version.

VII

We have seen how fearlessly the inspired writers of the Old Testament books have used various kinds of folklore. As we approach the vitally important subject of their treatment of the most universal form of folklore, the myth, let us try to be equally fearless, perfectly confident that we have here a book inspired by God in a sense in which no other book is inspired, and believing that we honor God far more by seeking for what actually is in the Bible than by refusing to look for it lest we find something there which does not agree with what we have always thought the Bible must be. It is above all things necessary that we shall be disinterested as we study its treatment of those ideas which, among all other ancient peoples, if not among the Hebrews, became mythology — ideas about deity, about the origin of things, about the world and man, and about man's relations with deity. If we find anything in the Bible which we did not think was there and should not have expected to find there, let us not try to explain it away, or give the words any other meaning than they honestly and obviously have; but, just because we believe that

the Bible is a work of divine inspiration, let us look with frank simplicity for the meaning of the things we do find there.

The early chapters of Genesis have been the ground of so many conflicts that it is not singular, perhaps, that we are somewhat unduly sensitive on the subject of them.

We know that every people in the world has its myths about creation. To attempt, however superficially, to compare the scriptural account with any of them would carry us into the domain of comparative religions. It is enough to say that, since the discovery and decipherment of a series of Assyro-Babylonian tablets now in the British Museum, we know that, so far as the biblical account is related to any other, it is most closely related to the Assyro-Babylonian tradition, which we find embodied in a great epic poem of considerable poetic value, written on these tablets. There is no reason to doubt of the antiquity of the ideas which it embodies; the poem was inscribed long before Abraham's day, and it is certain that Abraham must have been familiar with its ideas before his departure from Chaldea. He probably copied the lines again and again as a school exercise, as we now know that boys did long before his day.

Is, then, the first chapter of Genesis simply the Chaldean folklore of this great subject, brought

to Palestine by Abraham and by him handed down to his descendants? A few extracts from the creation tablets of Assyria will show their points of likeness and unlikeness to the first chapter of Genesis. The first of the seven tablets begins:

At that time the heaven above had not announced,
Or the earth beneath recorded, a name [a thing — that is, before anything existed].
The unopened deep was their generator,
Mummu Tiamat [mother chaos] was the mother of them all.
Their waters [of chaos] were embosomed as one, and
The cornfield was unharvested, the pasture was overgrown;
At that time the gods had not appeared, any of them;
By name they were not recorded, no destiny had they fixed:
Then the great gods were created.

Here we find matter coming before divinity. The gods are born of Mummu Tiamat ("Chaos"): "the great gods" first, the lesser ones afterward. Conflict between them ensues. The fourth tablet describes the overthrow of Tiamat — that is, the bringing of order out of chaos — and tells how Anu, the eldest of the gods, prepared the seven mansions of the great gods:

He fixed the stars, even the twin stars, to correspond to them.
He ordained the year, appointing the signs of the zodiac over it,

For each of the twelve months he fixed three stars,
From the day when the year issues forth to the close;
He founded the mansion of the god of the ferry-boat[84]
[the sun god], that they might know their bounds.
That they might not err [make the mistake of shining
when they ought not], that they might not go astray
in anything.

It is interesting to observe that the subject which has given rise to more myths than any other, provoking more effort to explain it, is the daily miracle of sunrise and sunset. After further details, the account goes on:

He illuminated the Moon-god that he might watch over the
night,
And ordained for him the ending of the night that the day
might be known [to keep the sun in order; a perfect
system of checks and balances, it may be observed],
Saying: "Month by month, without break,
Keep watch in thy disc,
At the beginning of the month kindle the light [the new
moon],
Announcing thy horns that the heaven may know [that
it is the beginning of the month];
On the seventh day, filling thy disc,
Thou shalt open indeed its narrow contraction."

In all this we see a striking resemblance to the Bible story of creation, and a no less striking difference. The tablets, like Genesis, show creation as divided into seven successive days (or acts); in Genesis the seventh is sacred rest; in the

[84] The sun is the god of the ferry-boat, because it is always crossing from one side of the horizon to the other.

tablets the act of creation still goes on. In both accounts the world was preceded by a watery chaos. The order of creation is so far the same that light is created first, then the firmament of heaven, and afterward comes the appointment of the heavenly bodies "for signs and for seasons and for days and for years." But there are far greater points of difference. In the Assyro-Babylonian account light is not called into being by a word of God, but is the result of a conflict between a deity and chaos. In the Assyro-Babylonian account there is absolutely no religious idea; the gods, as well as men, have come out of chaos, divine forces having triumphed over the inherently evil forces of matter. In Genesis the material universe is not self-existent, but is called into being by God; it is not inherently evil or inimical to man; on the contrary, it is all very good. In Genesis the truth of the pre-existence of God and his absolute independence of matter is clearly taught; and when we see how impossible either the strong-minded Assyrians or the cultured Greeks found it to arrive at this idea, it becomes marvelous that the childlike Hebrews attained to it. Certainly they could have attained it only by an inspiration differing in kind no less than in degree from the inspiration of the poets and men of genius of our own or any other age.

Yet if the first chapter of Genesis is not my-

thology, neither is it science. We have got far beyond the time when it is even thinkable that the world was made in six days; and happily we have come to the time when we begin to see that to interpret the word "day" figuratively as "period" or "æon" or anything else than "day," so long as we interpret literally all the rest of the passage in which the word stands, is a dishonest juggling with words. There can be no question that the writer of this chapter meant by "day" a period of twenty-four hours. The very fact of a sabbath divinely ordained at this time is an irrefutable witness against any other interpretation, since it is based upon the assumption that the six days, as well as the seventh, were literal days.

Not being a scientific account of the origin of things, all attempts to harmonize this chapter with science are entirely gratuitous. For the purpose for which it was written it makes no difference whether or not this account teaches that light was made before the sun or vertebrate animals before reptiles. For even a casual reading must show that, though we still have to inquire the purpose of this account, we know that it was certainly not to teach science.[55]

[55] The "scientific" element of the story of creation belongs to an early chapter in the history of science; in fact, almost to the beginning. The truly Israelitish element, that which is essential — namely, the fact that God created the world, and that he controls

But if neither myth nor science, what is this description? It is poetry: an epic of creation, cast in the same mold as the great Assyro-Babylonian epic, though conceived in so different a spirit. As a teaching of the relations between the world and man — that is, science — it has the childlike and imperfect character of all folklore; but as the literary vehicle for showing the relation between man and God — that is, religion — it is so marvelously adapted to its purpose as to prove itself inspired. And how much grander and more Godlike must it be (using, as we must, relative words for that which is absolute) to take a story which is the common property of all men, familiar to the Hebrew people, and to all peoples to whom this word was to come, and, retaining its shape and outline, so that none who heard it should be confused by its novelty, so to transfigure its significance as to make it the revelation of divine truth; how much more like the training of children by a father, than it would have been to give them something entirely new and undreamed of by them before! How easy for men to apprehend the truth that comes to them by the transfiguration of familiar ideas; how difficult for any man to take in an entirely new set of ideas! [56]

it — is naturally expressed in the categories of the writer's time. The distinctively Old Testament element is here also the permanent element.

[56] The phenomenal progress of Christian Science, compared

VIII

A comparison of the biblical treatment of all that is set down in the early chapters of Genesis with the folklore of other peoples makes plainer than any definition can do the difference between myth and poetry. True poetry has spiritual significance; myth, except as we find it in the Old Testament, has none. Take the story of paradise, for example. Nearly every nation — Hindu, Assyrian, Greek, Norse — has its myth of the Tree of Life. The Greek precisely inverts the Hebrew idea: it is a virtue in Heracles to triumph over the serpent that guards the golden apples in the garden of Hesperides; the Hindus guard their paradise by a dreadful dragon, and man has no interest in it whatever; the Assyrian cedar and the Norse Yggdrasil are alike without religious import; only in the Bible does the story of paradise show the very condition of life to be communion with God. So, though among nearly all ancient peoples we find evidences of an attempt to wrestle with the profound mystery of evil, only in the story of the fall do we find the truth that that which separates from God is sin, and at the same time are given a hope that some-

with the difficulty with which the devout mind receives the conclusions of scholarship, is an illustration of this statement. Christian Science is a transfiguration (or a travesty) of familiar ideas, and those to whom they appear to be a transfiguration receive them with alacrity. The discoveries of scholarship are entirely new ideas to the unscholarly, and it is with the greatest possible difficulty that even fair-minded people who are not scholars can receive them.

how good shall be the final goal of ill; that man shall eventually be victor over evil.

The commonest of all myths is the deification of a human being. We find the influence of this idea in the story of Enoch; but it is there made to teach the marvelous religious truth that the perfect life is a walk with God. So with the flood traditions, which, though not universal, are found in many parts of the world; they have absolutely no moral significance; only the story in Genesis teaches the irreparable disaster wrought by sin, and gives promise of a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The more we study the myths of other nations, the more we shall be impressed with the utter absence of superstition in the Bible. At an age when superstitious ideas prevailed the whole world over, and in a state of civilization in which at any period of history superstitions naturally cluster about everything — days, seasons, periods of life, human relationships — it is simply marvelous that we find nothing of the sort in Israel. We have only to read Frazer's *Golden Bough;* we have only to reflect on the superstitious "medicine" practices of primitive peoples, to be appalled by the fact that instinctively all human relationships, experiences, and functions, diseases, purifications, festivals, are made a center of superstition, and to marvel at the simplicity

and certainty with which in the Old Testament all these are raised into the hygienic or the ethical sphere. Compared with the universal customs of primitive peoples, the Mosaic law, which we deem so burdensome, is a light and merciful yoke.

Still more remarkable is it to find nothing superstitious, or even mythical, in the Hebrew idea of God. Primitive and elementary the Hebrew ideas often were. God *walked* in the Garden of Eden; he was obliged to *come down* to see what was going on at Babel; for centuries he was the one God from the point of view of Israel only, and they quite believed that the gods of other nations — Chemosh, Moloch, Baal — were actual entities, though of no significance to a nation whose god was Jehovah, a King above all other gods. Even the first commandment does not say there *is* no other God but Jehovah, but merely that Israel must acknowledge no other; and the reason why is stated: because he brought Israel out of the house of bondage.

Yet there is never any confusion in the mind of Israel as to the nature of Jehovah — that he is spirit and not flesh; or as to his character — that he is just and wise and good. And it is marvelous that the Hebrews, who were utterly without metaphysics and well-nigh incapable of abstraction, whose language indeed has no ab-

stract words, so that in all abstract matters they are obliged to think in figures and in terms of imagination, yet never had any myth about God. It is more impressive than we perhaps are able to appreciate that the Hebrew language has no word for "goddess," and that all the ideas connected with sex are absolutely foreign to the early religion of Israel.[57] The word "goddess" appears twice in Kings,[58] but in the Hebrew it is a masculine form, simply because there was no feminine form of the word; where other writers speak of the goddesses of the nations, they use the word "abomination."

The Hebrews neither identified God with nature, as in pantheism, nor deified the powers and processes of nature, as in mythology. Nothing is without God; but all things are merely his ministers. He was in the burning bush, but the bush was not divine.[59] He makes the clouds his chariot;[60] but he is not Aurora, nor the Dawn, nor Apollo. He comes swooping on the wings of the wind,[61] but he is not Æolus nor Zephyrus. Elijah commanded fire from heaven to burn the messengers of Ahaziah,[62] but this was not a fire-

[57] It is a striking fact that the prophets in their century-long warfare against strange gods never coin the feminine form, although the worship of female divinities was undoubtedly practiced. For such the word Astarte (plural Astartes), but in Hebrew Ashtaroth, is used. The Hebrew singular, Ashtoreth, has the vocalization of *bosheth*, "shame."

[58] 1 Kings 11: 5, 33.

[59] Ex. 3: 2–4.

[60] Ps. 104: 3.

[61] 2 Sam. 22: 11; Ps. 104: 3.

[62] 2 Kings 1: 10.

god. Though Abraham "came out" from Harran, the seat of the moon myth, and brought with him the "night religion" of the broad and burning plains of Mesopotamia, where the stars are the chief objects of interest, astrology was no part of the Hebrew religion. "The evening and the morning were the day" with Abraham in Chaldea, as with all who dwell in shadeless regions, where traveling is done by night; and amid the shadowing hills and deep valleys of Palestine, it was still to the stars [63] that he lifted up his eyes to find a witness to the faithfulness of him who promised; but he was not a star-worshiper.

Yet that there are genuine myths in the Old Testament is certain, though all of them are used in a thoroughly spiritual way. Mythical animals play a larger part there than our English translations permit us to recognize, though not so large as in most mythological systems. The leviathan,[64] the dragon,[65] the phœnix,[66] the night hag (*Lillith*),[67] the satyr,[68] none of which ever existed out of mythology, are all there, and all

[63] Gen. 15: 5.

[64] Job 41: 1; Ps. 104: 26, etc.

[65] The dragon myth frequently occurs. In Job 3: 8, "Let those that ban the ocean (i. e., magicians) ban it (his day), [those] who are appointed to rouse up the dragon." Amos 9: 3, "the serpent" is properly translated "the dragon," and it is Jehovah himself who is speaking. So Ps. 74: 13, 14; Isa. 27: 1, etc.

[66] Job 29: 18. Cheyne, however, thinks that this unknown Hebrew word must refer to a tree (see context and LXX). But Hebrew tradition makes it "phœnix" (R. V., margin).

[67] Isa. 34: 14 (R. V.). [68] Isa. 13: 21.

are treated seriously. Even those birdlike or beastlike creatures, the cherub [69] and the seraph,[70] appear to be mythical — not angels, but personifications of processes of nature; perhaps the protean cloud, the zigzag lightning — the word "seraph" appears to mean a flash of fire; what, precisely, the word "cherub" means is not known. In the book of Job,[71] Jehovah himself is described as making reference to these myths for purposes of instruction; we generally say that he is describing the crocodile and the hippopotamus, though we know perfectly well that the descriptions are not at all those of these creatures and that they precisely correspond to the dragon and other mythical animals.

Allusions to nature-myths are not infrequent in the prophets. Amos says that Jehovah maketh the dawn winged,[72] and Joel speaks of the dawn spreading out her wings over the mountains.[73] The Psalmist pictures Jehovah coming to his help riding upon a cherub.[74] Isaiah makes evident allusion to the old myth that the sun is a bird which daily loses its power of flight and falls into the sea, where its light is quenched: "How art thou fallen from heaven, light-bringer, son of the Dawn!" [75] And Job accounts for night and day by the very familiar old myth of

[69] Ex. 25: 19, etc.
[70] Isa. 6: 2.
[71] Job 41: 5; 41: 1, etc.
[72] Amos 4: 13 (Heb.).
[73] Joel 2: 2.
[74] Ps. 18: 10.
[75] Isa. 14: 12.

the dragon which swallowed the sun, and then is pierced and overcome by a god (in this case Jehovah), freeing the light again.[76] Yet in all these instances the supremacy of Jehovah over these nature-processes, and their sole function as ministers of his will, give to them, myths though they are, a genuinely religious character. The mythical character of these stories and conceptions has ceased to be felt by the writers; they have become simply the vehicles of religious truth.

This, indeed, is the witness to the divine character of the Old Testament, that it does not part company with all ideas which the best human intellects had been able to work out, but that it takes these ideas, the common property of all men, and pours them full of religious truth.

The more familiar we are with the folklore of all nations, the more competent we become to detect the folklore which is in the Bible, the deeper and more impressive must become our apprehension of the divine inspiration of this wonderful book.

[76] Job 26: 13 (R. V.).

CHAPTER III

THE POETRY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

I

In the poetry of a nation the heart of a nation is revealed. The poetry of the Bible shows the heart of Israel — it is the utterance of friendship between God and man; and the poetry of Hebrew prophet and psalmist remains to this day the best expression of the emotions of the heart toward God.

Among all peoples the first expression, not only of men's feeling, but of their thought, is made in poetry. One reason for this we have seen; verse aids the memory and guards against change — a very important matter when the memory is the only medium by which thought can be preserved. A deeper reason is that poetry, being the language both of emotion and of imagination, is the natural vehicle of utterance in the infancy of peoples as of individuals; for in infancy the imagination is most vivid and the emotions most clamorous for expression.[1]

[1] "Poetry is the mother-tongue of the human race."— J. G. Hammon (1730–88), quoted in the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, art. "Poetry."

From the very beginning, poetry was allied with religion. It was so with the nations of the East; it was not less so with the pagan nations of Europe. As a brilliant French writer has said, Paganism was the son of Poetry, and permitted his mother access to his altars. But pagan altars are not her first home. Poetry was holy before it was superstitious; that is, it was first of all the genuine expression of the aspiration of the soul toward the best it knew. The difference between Hebrew poetry and that of all other peoples is that, while the latter degenerated into superstition, and thus became the expression of ignoble emotions, Hebrew poetry never lost its early character. It was the child of holiness, as Israel was the child of God. We find no Lucretius or Sappho among the Hebrew poets, nor in their poetry the utterance of a base emotion.

Not that it does not express hatred and revenge. The denunciatory psalms are as terrible as anything in literature. But they are genuinely religious, though so far from Christian. All the foes of Israel are the foes of God, just as the history of their wars was the Book of the Wars of Jehovah. Hebrew poetry, knowing all human interests — love of nature as in Deborah's Ode and the Blessing of Moses, sorrow in many a psalm and prophecy, friendship in David's

dirge over Saul and Jonathan, earthly love in the Song of Solomon — knows them all as quickened with a spark of heaven. Religion belongs to the poetry of Israel as light and heat to a ray of sunlight.

This is not to say that there is no Hebrew poetry except such as belongs to the religious life, according to the current unhappy division of life into two, the sacred and the secular. The Hebrews knew no such division. Lamech's "Sword Song" and the "Well Song," though essentially secular from the prevailing point of view, are not so from the point of view of Israel. Not only the ceremonials of religion, but all aspects of life in Israel, were beautified with poetry, just because all aspects of life were religious. Maidens went out to the vineyards with songs and dances, for the vintage festival was a religious festival; and it was at a vintage festival, in the turbulent "days when the judges ruled," that the men of Benjamin "caught" their wives as the Romans carried off their Sabine wives a thousand years later.[2] The harp and the lute, the tabret and the pipe, "were in the feasts" of Israel, with "the noise of songs" in the time of Amos[3] and Isaiah,[4] as well as in the early days when the women went out with timbrels

[2] Judg. 21: 20–23.
[3] Am. 5: 23; 8: 10.
[4] Isa. 5: 12.

and instruments of music, singing and dancing, to meet the conquering David, with their

> Saul has slain his thousands,
> And David his ten thousands.[5]

It was one of the bitter woes of Jerusalem in the time of siege, worthy of being named by the writer of Lamentations with the last extremity of women's anguish and little children's suffering, that "the young men ceased from their music;"[6] and the Psalmist, looking forward to the great dedication festival of the new earth, expects, as the Revised Version of the eighty-seventh psalm shows us, that "they that sing as well as they that dance" shall say, "All my fresh springs are in thee."[7]

II

When, however, we speak of Hebrew poetry, we do not speak of a metrical rhymed composition like English or French or Italian poetry. The poetry of the Bible is in general unrhymed,[8] and though it appears to have metre, yet its characteristics are so unlike classical metres that schol-

[5] 1 Sam. 18: 7.

[6] Lam. 5: 14.

[7] Ps. 87: 7.

[8] With the better knowledge of Hebrew gained from study of the cognate living languages, rhyme is found in various poetical and proverbial passages, and probably will be found in others. E. g., Job 11: 12: "Even a senseless man may be taught, And a wild ass's colt may be caught." The assonance is as in the Hebrew. The language forms lend themselves to assonance, and of this there are many instances.

ars are of various minds as to its nature. In general it may be said that, while classical metres depend upon quantity, Hebrew metre appears to depend upon accent. It is certainly more definitely conditioned by the sense than most classical or modern metres. The line uniformly corresponds with a break in the sense, and the symmetry of corresponding lines is rather in the matter than in the form. Goethe very finely adopted this method. Even in translation this makes itself felt. It has been compared with the rhythm of the *Nibelungenlied*, and the popular songs of Palestine today fall into the same rhythm.

We know that a great body of the poetry of Israel is lost to us: three volumes are probably mentioned in the Old Testament which are not included in our Scriptures. One is a collection of epic ballads describing the battles of Israel, called the Book of the Wars of Jehovah;[9] another is the collection of lyrics called in the Authorized Version the Book of Jasher and in the Revised the Book of the Upright.[10] There seems also to have been a purely lyrical collection of dirges — a very favorite form of poetry among the Hebrews, as is evident from many allusions.[11]

[9] Num. 21: 14.

[10] 2 Sam. 1: 18; see p. 33, n. 15.

[11] Am. 5: 2; Jer. 48: 36; Ezek. 19: 1; 26: 17, etc.

"Jeremiah made a dirge upon Josiah," untimely slain by Pharaoh in the battle of Megiddo.[12] The Chronicler tells us that "all the singing men and the singing women speak of Josiah in their dirges to this day. So they made them a custom in Israel and lo, they are written among the Dirges." [12] We do not, however, find any such poem referring to Josiah's death in the book called in our English Bible the Lamentations of Jeremiah, but in Hebrew not attributed to Jeremiah, and called simply by its first word, "How;" and it seems probable that some other collection is referred to by the Chronicler. The custom of poetical lamentation was, indeed, carried to such an extreme in Jeremiah's day that he felt constrained to object to it, in this very case of Josiah, showing that death was by no means the worst evil that Israel had to apprehend.[13]

Weep not for the dead [King Josiah] nor bemoan him,
But weeping weep for him that goeth away [the exiled King Jehoahaz],
For he shall never come back nor see his own country.

The metre of the dirge is distinctly recognizable. It consists of a long and a short line, in the proportion of three accented syllables to two. This appears to be a metre peculiarly appropriate to elegiac poetry. "What is more natural than

[12] 2 Chron. 35: 25. [13] Jer. 22: 10.

that lamentation should begin with a long effusion, and suddenly be stifled in a sob?"[14] It is, however, not confined to the dirge; we find it in songs of joy and in prophetic passages.[15] It appears to be a metre peculiarly natural to Semitic peoples. Arab mothers of today sing lullabies in this metre to their children; and I have repeatedly observed it in the singing-games of Syrian children.

Although, as we have seen, it is commonly held that there is no true drama in the Bible, there are many highly dramatic passages. Such are Ps. 2, where the speakers are Jehovah, the kings of the nations, and the psalmist; the "parable" against the king of Babylon in Isa., chap. 47; and such is the beautiful prophecy of Zion in Isa., chap. 63. The twenty-fifth psalm is very dramatic. The first seven verses are a prayer of David. Then the oracle answers in three verses. David replies in one verse, and the oracle answers in three (making another seven), and then David prays in seven more verses. The scheme of sevens here exemplified, though found in all early literatures, is peculiarly characteristic of Hebrew thought.

[14] Kautsch, *Die Poesie und die poetischen Bücher*, p. 12. Budde (*Dictionary of the Bible*) calls it "a limping metre."

[15] It occurs in Isa. 40: 1–3, and in the great "Taunt Song," Isa. 14: 4–23, as well as in such passages as Ps. 19: 8–10, in praise of the law.

III

Though a very large portion of the Bible is poetry, this fact was not discovered, or at least was not felt to be a thing of moment, until less than two hundred years ago. It was in 1710 that Bishop Lowth first pointed out to Bible students that "the Bible was a work of taste," and should be studied from that point of view, and it was his discovery of the most striking characteristic of Hebrew poetry, parallelism, that enabled him, not only to prove his point, but to produce the most valuable work on prophecy known for many years. The Hebrew manuscripts were written, as has already been observed, without punctuation or division of any kind, and as rhyme is not a usual characteristic of Hebrew poetry, and its metre is not easily recognizable, it is not strange that it needed long study and a peculiar insight to make the discovery that parallelism is its most obviously distinctive feature.[16]

Now, the particularly interesting thing about the parallelism of Hebrew poetry is that, like all other characteristics of poetry, it grew directly out of the movements of the dance. "The dance is the symmetry and harmony of motion," and parallelism is, as Herder says, the simplest form

[16] As has been seen (p. 32), parallelism, though an important, is by no means the one essential, mark of poetry.

of symmetry in words. In all languages, parallelism is the natural expression of feeling. "So soon as the heart gives way to its emotion, wave follows wave, and this is parallelism," says Herder. It is natural to everyone, natural to ourselves, to fall into parallelism in times of deep emotion; all languages easily lend themselves to it, and this is why the poetry of the Bible loses so little by translation.[17]

But there is no monotony in this rhythmical parallelism. It varies greatly, and students commonly distinguish five general classes of it, in each of which we can feel this swaying dance-rhythm. The simplest form of parallelism is *synonymous*, where the second line echoes, and thus enforces, the thought of the first; as in Ps. 114:

When Israel went forth out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,
Judah became his sanctuary,
Israel [became] his dominion.
The sea saw that and fled,
Jordan was driven back;

and so all the way through.

In some cases the second line is not perfectly equivalent to the first, though parallel to it; as in Ps. 19:1:

[17] Parallelism is not distinctive of Hebrew poetry; it characterizes that of nearly all the Semitic peoples.

The heavens declare the glory of God,
And the firmament showeth his handiwork.

Slightly involved is *antithetic* parallelism, which confirms the statement of the first line by a contrast in the second. Many instances occur in Proverbs:

A wise son maketh a glad father;
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.[18]

Every wise woman buildeth her house;
But the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.[19]

The antithetic parallel is sometimes strengthened by illustrative clauses. Thus in Cant. 1:5:

I am black
but comely
[black] as the tents of Kedar
[comely] as the curtains of Solomon.

A third form of parallelism is called *synthetic* or constructive. Here the second line (or two or three following lines) carries out the idea of the first in one way or another:

Yet I have set my King
Upon my holy hill of Zion.[20]

and

The wicked are not so
But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.[21]

[18] Prov. 10:1. Kautsch, on such parallels, quotes from Alciphron: "It is as if the father spoke to his son and the mother repeated it" (*Die Poesie u. d. poetischen Bücher des A. T.*, p. 8).

[19] Prov. 14:1.

[20] Ps. 2:6.

[21] Ps. 1:4.

Perhaps the most perfect illustration of synthetic parallelism is the last chapter of Ecclesiastes:

Remember also thy Creator in the day of thy youth,
Or ever the evil days come and the years draw nigh
when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them.
While the sun or the light, etc.[22]

Here the first statement includes all that follows; the second carries out the thought of the first, describing (by contrast) the days of youth; and the remainder of the section develops this contrast, describing old age.

A very striking and effective form of parallelism has a sort of graduated rhythm; the second line takes up some words from the first, repeats them, and completes the thought. This gives a peculiar strength and beauty to the poem:

Till thy people pass over, O Lord;
Till thy people pass over which thou hast purchased.[23]

Several instances of this noble form of poetry occur in Deborah's Ode:

Until that I, Deborah, arose,
Until I arose a mother in Israel;[24]

and

Because they came not up to the help of the Lord,
To the help of the Lord against the mighty.[25]

[22] Eccl., chap. 12.
[23] Ex. 15: 16.
[24] Judg. 5: 7.
[25] Judg. 5: 23. This graduated rhythm may be observed in the Syrian dance-song of today. I have heard children in their dance-

This kind of parallelism, usually called *climactic,* is peculiarly characteristic of the refrain, that well-known feature of ballad verse. For example, David's dirge over Saul and Jonathan [26] has a climactic hero-refrain:

How are the heroes fallen,
How are the heroes fallen in the midst of the battle
How are the heroes fallen and the weapons of war perished.

Psalm 80 has a climactic refrain, especially characterized by the accumulation of the names of God:

Elohim, restore us,
And let thy face shine that we may be saved (vs. 3).

Elohim, Sabaoth, restore us,
And let thy face shine that we may be saved (vs. 7).

Elohim, Sabaoth, turn now, look from heaven,
See and visit this vine;
And protect that which thy right hand planted,
And be over the branch thou hast strengthened for thyself (vs. 14).

Jehovah, Elohim, Sabaoth, restore us,
Let thy face shine that we may be saved (vs. 19).

The refrain, which is so striking a feature of ballad lore, frequently occurs in the more studied

plays go through a great number of verses, each of which takes up a word or phrase from that preceding, so that they hang together like the links of a chain. Interesting examples, where the recognition of this form is of great value for interpretation, occur in Isa. 1: 2, 9, 10, and 17, 18, 23, 27; Hos. 5: 14, 15; 6: 1, and other prophetic passages.

[26] 2 Sam. 1: 17 ff.

poems of the Old Testament. Pss. 107 and 136 are important illustrations. In the latter, "for his mercy endureth forever," recurs with every verse. The refrain of Ps. 107 is the most elaborate illustration of the refrain in all literature. The refrain, "Why art thou cast down," etc., shows that Pss. 42 and 43 ("The Exile's Lament" it is sometimes called) were originally one, divided perhaps for liturgical purposes. Am. 4: 6–11 is an impressive instance of the refrain. It recurs like the tolling of a bell:

"Yet have ye not returned unto me," saith the Lord.

IV

Another form of parallelism is a variant of the antithetic parallel.

Jacob's explanation of his blessings of Joseph's two sons is an antithetic parallel composed of two synonymous parallels antithetic to one another and forming a Tennysonian stanza:

He also shall become a people
And he also shall be great;
Howbeit his younger brother shall be greater than he
And his seed shall become a multitude of nations.[27]

This form of the antithetic parallel is sometimes called *introverted*. It occurs frequently in both prose and verse.

Introverted parallelism appears, indeed, to be

[27] Gen. 48: 19.

peculiarly characteristic of the Hebrew mind — one of its ways of thinking. For example, the catalogue of "the generations of the sons of Noah" given in Gen., chap. 10, follows this order. Noah's sons are first named:

Shem,
  Ham,
    and Japheth (vs. 1)
    The sons of Japheth (vss. 2–5)
  The sons of Ham (vss. 6–20)
The sons of Shem (vss. 21–31)

The sequence of these sections used to be held to prove that Japheth was the eldest of Noah's sons, Shem being first named because he was the progenitor of the chosen people. In fact, it proves nothing but that this is the way the Hebrew mind worked. As Shem was first named (being the eldest), his descendants were last to be considered. Those who have lived in the East have found that this way of thinking is characteristic of the Semitic mind in general.

In it we find the explanation of the arrangement of clauses in such passages as the catalogue of Abraham's riches in Gen. 12:16. The order of it seems strange to us, but is precisely in accordance with the arrangement of ideas in the Hebrew mind. For a reason which will shortly appear, let me arrange the clauses thus, reading from *a* to *a'*:

c and men-servants — and maid-servants *c'*
b and he-asses — and she-asses *b'*
a And he had sheep and oxen — and camels *a'*

The sequence of clauses in this passage has from the earliest times been a puzzle to western commentators. Why the men-servants and the maid-servants should be wedged in between the he-asses and the she-asses appears to be a riddle without a solution. So thorough a scholar as the late Professor Dillmann, of Berlin, in the final edition of his work on Genesis (translated in 1897), says that "the mention of the male and female slaves between the mention of the he-asses and the she-asses is inexplicable," though he attempts to explain it by an ancient gloss or a copyist's misplacement. Now, without doubt a number of glosses have crept into the Old Testament text, and there are some evident instances of displacement of matter by copyists. But there is, perhaps, too great a willingness to accept one or other of these short and easy roads to a solution of difficulties; and there ought to be some other evidence of gloss or misplacement than the mere fact that the meaning of the passage is not obvious.

Returning to the diagram given above, let us draw a line through it.

We know that the strongest part of the arch is the keystone, that is, the center; and though it is entirely at variance with western ideas to

the strongest part of a statement anywhere but at the end — so much so that we avoid nothing so carefully as an anticlimax — yet we can hardly

call that a weak literary form which corresponds with the strongest of all forms of material construction; and this is precisely what this form of Hebrew literature appears to me to do. The men-servants and the maid-servants, being the most important part of Abraham's possessions, were naturally put in the place which belongs to the keystone of the arch.[28]

Another illustration may be found in Gen. 13: 10, a passage the construction of which also disturbs Professor Dillmann, though he thinks that "the inverted climax" "may be tolerated because the first comparison is pitched too high."

[28] Budde speaks of Lam., chap. 3, as forming "a central peak" between chaps. 1, 2 and 4, 5 (art. "Poetry" in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, p. 13). In the second part of Isaiah, chaps. 49–57 form such a central peak divided from chaps. 40–47 and 58–66 by the refrain: "There is no peace saith Jehovah (my God) to the wicked" (48: 22; 57: 27). This part of Isaiah is doubtless to be attributed to various prophets and various periods; nevertheless, *someone* gave the work its present form, and whoever he was, his mind appears to have worked in the same way, on a large scale, with other Hebrew minds in smaller matters. In Isaiah the "central peak" is the most important part of the prophecy, and it seems to me that peculiar importance attaches to Lam., chap. 3.

The story tells of Lot's search for a new home, since it is necessary for him and his kinsman Abram to part company by reason of the dissensions of their herdsmen on the question of water for their flocks. Lot turns his eyes to the Jordan district, and (*a-b-c-c'-b'-a'*):

c before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah like paradise *c'*
b behold it was well watered everywhere like the land of Egypt *b'*
a he beheld all the plain of Jordan as thou comest in to Zoar. *a'*

There is no anticlimax "like paradise, like the land of Egypt," such as Professor Dillmann supposes. This is how the mind of this Hebrew author worked: (*a*) the Jordan plain was like the plain of Zoar in the Nile delta; (*b*) it was watered (by Jordan) as the land of Egypt was watered (by the Nile); (*c*) so beautiful and fertile was it at this time (before Jehovah destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) that it could be compared only with paradise with its four life-giving streams. The puzzling passage becomes a lovely prose-poem, full of exquisite illustrations. If Lot saw half in the plain of Jordan that we see in this little poem, it is no wonder that he chose it for his abode.

A single strophe of Ps. 89 (vss. 28–37) is a remarkable instance of introverted parallelism. When we consider that no thought of this form

was in the minds of the translators, and that, far from always rendering a given word by the same English word, they made it a principle to seek for variety in rendering, it is simply amazing that the parallelism has been so well preserved. Reading *a* and *a'*, then *b* and *b'*, and so on until we reach *c* and *c'*, we find an amazing parallelism, till we come to the keystone of the thought in the very center, vss. 32, 33:

a) My mercy will I keep for him *for evermore,*
and my covenant shall *stand fast* with him. (vs. 28)
b) His *seed* also will I make to endure for ever,
and his *throne* as the days of heaven. (vs. 29)
c) If his children *forsake my law,*[29]
And walk not in my *judgments;* (vs. 30)
d) If they *break* my statutes,
and *keep* not my commandments; (vs. 31)
e) Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod,
and their iniquity with stripes, (vs. 32)
e') Yet my mercy will I not utterly take from him,
nor prove false in my truth. (vs. 33)
d') My covenant will I not *break,*
nor *alter* the thing that is gone out of my lips. (vs. 34)
c') Once have I sworn by my *holiness;*
unto David will I *not lie.* (vs. 35)
b') His *seed* shall endure for ever,
and his *throne* as the sun before me. (vs. 36)
a') It shall be established *for evermore* as the moon,
and the witness in the sky *standeth fast.* (vs. 37)

[29] The *verbal* parallelism fails in vss. 30, 35, but not the correspondence of *thought,* which here and in the following parallels is antithetic. For a soul after covenanting with God to forsake his statutes (vs. 30) is *to lie* (vs. 35); the *judgments* of God (vs. 30) and his *holiness* (vs. 35) are parallel.

This is a single strophe from a great prophetic ode. A strophe is a group of several verses, all of which belong to one idea. The ode of Deborah [80] contains three strophes of 3×3 verses, each with an introductory and a concluding verse. The magnificent ode of Moses [81] consists of three parts with four strophes in each part, each strophe answered by an antistrophe. The form of the antistrophe is, of course, the antithetic parallel. It reminds us of Greek lyric poetry, in which the strophic evolutions of the dance were reproduced in an opposite direction by the antistrophe.

V

We have already seen that, though parallelism is the most obvious mark of Hebrew poetry, and was the first to be detected, yet it is by no means its only distinguishing characteristic.

The poetry of prophecy, as we might expect, is distinguished rather by rhythm than by parallelism. Its rhythmical character has only of late been established, and the translators of the Revised Version have made no effort to reproduce it — happily, for with all their scholarship they are manifestly not poets. A number of scholars have, however, undertaken to do so with striking success.

Professor George Adam Smith, of Glasgow,

[80] Judg., chap. 5. [81] Deut., chap. 32.

has translated Isa. 63: 1–7 in very rhythmical strain. That it is also dramatic will be clearly perceived:

Who is this coming from Edom,
Raw-red his garments from Bossrah!
This sweeping on in his raiment,
Swaying in the wealth of his strength?

I that do speak in righteousness,
Mighty to save!

Wherefore is red on thy raiment,
And thy garments like to a wine treader's?

A trough I have trodden alone,
Of the peoples no man was with me.
So I trod them down in my wrath,
And trampled them down in my fury;
Their life-blood sprinkled my garments,
And all my raiment I stained.
For the day of revenge in my heart;
And the year of my redeemed has come.
And I looked, and no helper,
I gazed, and none to uphold!
So my righteousness won me salvation;
And my fury, it hath upheld me.
So I stamp on the peoples in my wrath,
And make them drunk with my fury,
And bring down to earth their life-blood.[82]

The rhythm of the Hebrew is a natural rhythm; unlike the Greek and the French, but like the English, the emphatic syllable coincides with the natural stress of the voice, and the

[82] "Isaiah" in the *Expositor's Bible*, Vol. II, p. 443 (Armstrong & Co.).

length of the clause is closely related to the pulse of the blood, the beat of the heart, the expiration of the breath. In this it differs essentially from Latin poetry and that of its daughter-languages.

The difference between prose and poetry in any language is, however, made clearest, not by rhythm or metre or parallelism, or by any structural characteristic, but by imagery. We use figures in poetry which we may not use in prose. The imagery of Hebrew poetry is very remarkable. In no other literature in the world is it so daring, yet in no other is it so reverent. Forms of speech are used with reference to God which would seem impious if found elsewhere, and it is very significant that we do not find them impious here. What other poet could dare to say, speaking of natural afflictions, pestilence, famine, and such like:

O thou sword of Jehovah, how long will it be ere thou be quiet?
Gather thyself into thy scabbard! rest, be still![83]

The simplicity of the imagery is no less impressive. Metaphors of the most stupendous import are drawn from the common arts of life. "Thou didst thresh the nations in anger," says Habakkuk;[84] and Joel cries: "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: tread ye, for the wine press is full, the vats overflow, for their

[83] Jer. 47: 6. [84] Hab. 3: 12.

wickedness is great." [35] "O thou my threshing, the corn of my floor," groans Isaiah, "that which I have heard from the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, have I declared unto you." [36]

Many of the most significant illustrations are drawn from such ecclesiastical things as priests' ornaments and vestments. In Ps. 93: 1, "The Lord reigneth, he is appareled with majesty," the word "appareled" is the term specially applied to the dress and ornaments of priests. When the Psalmist says,

My frame was not hidden from thee,
When I was made in secret,
And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth,[37]

the word "curiously wrought" is that used with reference to the most subtle art of Phrygian workmen, that of designing in needlework, an art wholly devoted to the sanctuary and attributed to supernatural guidance in the case of Bezaleel, the chief worker on the tabernacle.

"Who covereth thyself with light as with a garment," [38] refers to the holy of holies.

All sorts of inanimate objects are personified: "Let the earth hear;" "Give ear, O ye heavens;" "Let the hills hear thy voice;" "Let the sea roar, let the field exult, let the trees of the wood sing for joy." [39]

[35] Joel 3: 13. [37] Ps. 139: 15.
[36] Isa. 21: 10. [38] Ps. 104: 2.
[39] Isa. 34: 1; Deut. 32: 1; Mic. 6: 1; Ps. 96: 11, 12

Very majestic are such personifications as picture Pestilence as marching before Jehovah.[40] Hades extending her throat and opening her insatiable jaws,[41] thunder as "the clangor of Jehovah."[42] Such personifications as these throw some light upon what is called the anthropomorphism of the Old Testament conception of God: far more of it is pure imagery than is generally supposed. Those who object to the biblical doctrine of God that he is there made "a magnified and non-natural man," do so without apprehending the poetic character of many of the statements about him. They are figurative; and people of trained minds should have no difficulty in discerning this. The Bible descriptions of God are figurative, partly because figures give a more nearly just idea of things than abstract statements can do, and partly because the Hebrew language, like the vocabulary of a child, had no words for abstract ideas.[43]

VI

Nothing adds more to the vividness and beauty of the Bible poetry than an understanding of the

[40] Hab. 3: 5.

[41] Isa. 5: 14.

[42] Ps. 29: 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9.

[43] Human qualities are transferred to the personality of God "graphically as could not but happen when done by the vivacious, poetical, powerful phantasy of the people of Israel."— Davidson. *Old Testament Theology*, p. 109.

situation to which it refers. It has been said that the reason why Browning's poetry is difficult is that he always takes for granted that his readers know all that he knows. The range of Browning's knowledge was amazing, and few readers are equally at home in all its realms. Those who are so find his poetry as easy reading as Tennyson's, and far easier than Wordsworth's. So with the Bible: much of it is obscure from our lack of knowledge of historic facts and of the circumstances under which the passage was written. When we can ascertain these, the obscurity vanishes. A knowledge of the historic setting, furthermore, adds significance and makes the passage more telling. Ps. 110, a messianic psalm to us, must have referred, when it was written, to something that the writer understood. Let the reader turn to 2 Sam., chap. 7, trying to realize the feelings of David. It was the time when his wish to build a temple was thwarted by God, but with the check came also the assurance of God's continued favor to him and his house, the first overwhelming conviction that he was founding a dynasty which should endure forever in the face of all opposition. Let him try to realize what this idea of an enduring dynasty must have been to one who had never heard, in all his people's history, of anything like hereditary rule.

Now turn to Ps. 110. The poet sings exultantly:

Jehovah saith unto my lord [David],
"Sit thou on my right hand (as Jehovah drives in his war-chariot to overthrow David's enemies),
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Then David sees himself grasping the scepter of a great kingdom, "the scepter of power out of Zion," and becoming a ruler in the midst of his enemies; and then, still driving along in Jehovah's war-chariot, he sees the Lord's armies in the enthusiasm of their patriotism, their serried ranks "in holy array" as dewdrops from the womb of the morning — as bright in their shining armor, as countless in number, as the dewdrops that sparkle on the meadow in the early sunrise. Many of my readers are aware that this psalm is not now attributed to David by most scholars, and that this is a sore grievance to many devout souls, because our Lord quotes it as by David. I do not think that this will long continue to be a grievance, as people come better to understand the force of such expressions, through literary study. Nevertheless, it is very certain that the historic setting fits David's time; and though I would not set my opinion above that of trained scholars, I am inclined to think that even some of them, men of more scholarship than culture, would revise some of their

views if their literary perceptions were more acute.

The Hebrew genius for the mechanical construction of poetry often found expression in acrostic or alphabetic poems. The twenty-fifth psalm is alphabetic. Ps. 119 is shown in our Bible to be alphabetic — each group of eight verses beginning with the same Hebrew letter. Pss. 9 and 10 are acrostic, and this fact is further interesting as proving by the initial letters in the Hebrew that these two psalms were originally one, for Ps. 9 has the first part of the alphabet, and Ps. 10 the remaining letters, two verses being given to a letter. Ps. 111 has half a verse to each letter. Lamentations is largely alphabetical. The Revised Version shows the third chapter in strophes of three verses. In Hebrew the verses in each strophe begin with the same letter.

VIII

In the Revised Version the Psalter is divided into five books, each closing with a doxology (Pss. 41:13; 72:18, 19; 89:52; 106:48; and Ps. 150, which is a doxology). This is the division in the Hebrew Psalter. That these five books are not all of the same age is evident by the style and subjects, still more by the feeling of the psalms they contain. That some of them were independent psalm-books, before they were

united to form the Hebrew Psalter, is apparent from the fact that the same psalms, or parts of psalms, reappear in several of them, as was inevitable in a collection made of several books before the art of editing was invented. Ps. 60: 6–8, for example, is the same as Ps. 108: 7–10, and this Ps. 108 consists of Ps. 57: 7–11 prefixed to the verses from Ps. 60. Ps. 40: 13–17 appears alone as Ps. 70; Ps. 53 is the same as Ps. 14. A psalm which is given in 1 Chron. 16: 8–36 as having been sung at the dedication of the tabernacle is largely made up of Ps. 96 and parts of Pss. 105 and 106. The great "Dedication Ode," Ps. 68, contains quotations from the Song of Deborah and other psalms.

These facts are instructive, for they serve to show that inspiration is something different from what we have mostly supposed it to be. Some of the most unquestionably inspired passages in the Bible — passages which speak to us with all the force of a voice from God, or interpret our own emotions as they can be interpreted only by one inspired — have a structure so artificial, so dependent upon numerical correspondences and the balancing of figures, lines, and words, that it is evident that the personality of the writer had a large share in their production. Others are so compounded from the works of former writers that it is difficult to find in them any

other evidences of inspiration than that shown by any compiler of taste and judgment. It is at least very evident that the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets to a far greater degree than we may have supposed.

It is good for us to discover these facts, if only to show us that we may not dogmatize on the subject of inspiration, may not say it *must be* this or that. The genius of the Hebrew people, as a people, is in their poetry to a degree almost unknown in any other literature. Their child-like character is all there; in their most exalted flights they have not broken away from the child-love of the swaying dance and the artless play of setting opposites over against opposites, and equals against equals, of balancing entrance with exit, as Rabbi Akiba says. But is not this the very reason why we may feel sure of their inspiration? It is in the child-heart that the Spirit of God loves to dwell. And if, instead of a mere dictation of something entirely foreign to the man inspired, a supernatural guidance to some truth utterly out of the range of his ordinary experience, we find inspiration to have been a perpetual indwelling, a life of God in the soul of the man whose heart was as the heart of a little child, a tabernacling of the Holy One with a people who were in an especial sense the children of the Most High, so that their national

characteristics and methods of thought became, not hindrances to be overcome, but vehicles for the communication of divine truth — surely this will not be to us loss, but gain. For then, the Bible appearing to us more natural, we shall more easily perceive how much more than natural it is. Speaking to every one of us, as the apostles at Pentecost spoke to the Jews of the dispersion, to everyone in the language in which he was born, it brings us no bewildering message, but one which, appealing to that which is most true in ourselves, is its own witness that it is the very truth of God.

CHAPTER IV

HEROES AND HEROISM

I

When a narrative of memorable events is such as to touch the imagination, arouse the emotions, awaken the faculty of constructive imagery, and kindle the religious instinct, we call the story an epic. Large parts of the Bible narrative, though written in prose, appear to be epic in their nature, an appeal being made, not only to the conscience and the intelligence, but to the imagination and the emotions of the reader, the recital being none the less true for its poetic interpretation.

Now, the history of the epic is one, whether we seek for it in Palestine or Persia, India or Greece. It begins in folklore, myth or legend, or story, in which are gathered up precious memorials of events and personages of national interest. As these stories are handed down, they pass through imaginative and poetic minds; yet all the way along they are the property, not of this or that minstrel or story-teller, but of the people. The air is full of them; mothers tell them to their children, and old men relate them

to the young at the noonday rest or in the night halt on the march. By and by comes a true poet, a maker, and gathers up these stories of the people, this "epic stuff;" fixing in forms of imperishable beauty these memorials which are the common property of all. He is not a prophet, a seer; he does not ask for the meaning of these things; he is a poet, a creator, who gives to matter its inevitable form. It is a question of no moment who this poet is; for the importance lies not in him, but in his subject. It adds nothing to the ageless beauty and priceless worth of the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* that Homer wrote them; for the beauty and worth were always latent in the material, and he has only given it the form that by right belonged to it, so that in studying the *Iliad* it would aid us not one whit to know all about Homer, nor hinder us one particle were it conclusively proved that Homer was not its author.

There is another kind of epic, which literary men distinguish as intellectual and premeditated. Such are the *Æneid* and *Paradise Lost,* in both of which the authorship is an important factor. But it is very evident that nothing of this kind is in the Old Testament. The old records of heroes and heroism which we find in the early historic books are Homeric, not Miltonic; the

property of a whole people, not the gift to them of a single inspired mind.

The form in which inspired minds cast this common heritage molded the national character of the Hebrews, as epic narrative always tends to do, and to a far higher degree than Greek epic, for example, molded the national character of Greece. Nothing is more plain all through the Bible than that the minds of the whole people of Israel were steeped in a knowledge of their early history, precisely by this method. It is evident in the way the old stories are referred to by the prophets, to lend motive to their appeals to the people. Even to the close of Old Testament times copies of books must have been few, and only a very small learned class knew how to use them; yet the prophets always take for granted that the whole people are perfectly familiar with the heroic tales of their early history. "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn and the hole of the pit whence ye were digged; look unto Abraham your father and unto Sarah that bare you," [1] says the great prophet of the exile. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old," says the book of Micah; [2] and Hosea recalls to mind how "Jacob fled into the country of Syria and Israel

[1] Isa. 51: 1, 2. [2] Mic. 7: 20.

served for a wife and for a wife he kept sheep." [3] "O my people, remember now what Balak, king of Moab, consulted and Balaam, the son of Beor, answered him," says Micah again.[4] Isaiah alludes to Joshua's great victory at Beth-horon;[5] Malachi urges God's choice of Jacob before Esau as the motive of a better allegiance.[6] The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah,[7] the coming up of Israel from the "iron furnace" of Egypt,[8] the slaughter of Midian and the death of the king at the rock Oreb,[9] are mentioned again and again as things universally known. Hosea assumes that the whole of Jacob's story is familiar — his singular birth, when "he took his brother by the heel," and his manhood, when "he had power with God; yea he had power over the angel and prevailed." [10] He even takes for granted a knowledge of some incidents not in Genesis: he tells how at Bethel Jacob wept and made supplication unto the angel;[11] and Isaiah perhaps refers to some other unrecorded incident, when, prophesying of a happier future, he says: "Ja-

[3] Hos. 12: 12.
[4] Mic. 6: 5.
[5] Isa. 28: 21; cf. Hab. 3: 11.
[6] Mal. 1: 2.
[7] Isa. 1: 9; 13: 19, etc.; Jer. 23: 14, etc.; Am. 4: 11; Zeph. 2: 9.
[8] Jer. 11: 4; cf. Deut. 4: 20.
[9] Ps. 83: 11; Isa. 10: 26.
[10] Hos. 12: 3, 4a.
[11] Hos. 12: 4b.

cob shall not *now* be ashamed, neither shall his face *now* wax pale.[12]

That these allusions are to some well-known epic story seems certain when we consider that the prophets make few allusions to Israel's later history — to Solomon and his descendants, or to the history of the northern kingdom, though both are full of admirable illustrations of the truths they teach. They cannot take for granted that these are generally known. Nearly all the historic allusions of the prophets are to that period in Israel's history which corresponds to the heroic age of any people — the time before institutions have become established, laws and constitutions and forms of government — and when therefore the accidental superiority of an individual, his energy and physical force, make him a leader and a doer of deeds that leave a memory and form the staple of conversation, and the true education of a people who have not books. The age of the judges was such an heroic time; Jephthah, Gideon, and all the others are veritable heroes. The age of the patriarchs was such a time, and in all the epic story of the world there is no more epical figure than the Hebrew Ulysses, Jacob, whose wanderings covered nearly all the known world, from the Euphrates to the Nile. The prophets know that they may safely assume

[12] Isa. 29: 22.

that all the people are perfectly familiar with these stories.

II

What we have in the Old Testament is not, indeed, a poem like the Homeric epics; it is mainly prose, in which ballads and folklore are imbedded. Whether or not it is based upon an ancient poem, long lost to the world, and perhaps never committed to writing, is a question that would carry us too far; but the difference between the Hebrew epic, the records of Israel's heroes and heroism, and any other epic, is not mainly the difference between prose and poetry. Nor, though it does materially differ from other epics, is that difference that it presents a different type of manhood; the marvelous feature of all epic is that, without knowing anything of psychology, it shows human nature to be always and everywhere the same, especially in being religious. For the epic is always at the very foundation of the religious life of a people, whether in India or Scandinavia, Greece or Palestine. In these respects the Hebrew epic is like the epic of all nations; it differs from them in being spiritual, in pouring a spiritual meaning into the life of man with God. From the days of Abraham the Hebrew religion was a spiritual religion, and its poets were always to a certain degree seers.

III

This explains the difference between the hero stories of the Old Testament and the epics of other peoples. The stories of Abraham and Jacob, of Joshua and Gideon and Jephthah and David, are epic stories, as full of achievement and wordless suffering, as sublime in their pathos and power, self-conquest, submission, as intense in passion, as compelling in charm, as representatively human in their love, longing, energy, woe, as the stories of Hector or Agamemnon, of Ulysses or Priam. And yet there is a difference between them which the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews perceived, when he said that of the heroes of Israel the world was not worthy.[13] They had all the foibles, weaknesses, crimes of the worthies of Greece and India and the Northland, but the vision and faculty divine were also theirs; they alone of all the heroes of old were spiritually aware of God.[14] Their story is inspired, not because inspired men wrote it, but because they themselves were inspired with the consciousness of a divine being who was also a moral being. "The other gods desired praises, homage, sacrifice; their God desired goodness."[15]

[13] Heb. 11:38.

[14] "The Hebrew thought of God," says Mr. Alden in the work already referred to (p. 249), "was . . . the child's intimate thought, and had in it a naïve feeling not discernible in early pagan thought."

[15] H. P. Smith, *Old Testament History*, p. 103.

The Greek epic had, indeed, its revelation for the world — the revelation of the beautiful; but the message of the Hebrew epics is that the beautiful is also the good and the true. To the Greek these were three, as were the highest gods in his pantheon. To the Hebrew they were one, and could all be expressed by the one word "God." It is this that raises the heroism of the Hebrew heroes so far above that of all others, whether they be demigods or men. The Hebrews' vision of the good might be as limited as their notions of the true and beautiful were crude and barbaric, and as their thought of God fell short of his true character; but the three were never separated. There was no schism between the moral and the physical and the intellectual; all found their source and center in God. This is the explanation of that which has puzzled philosophers — the fact that not to artistic Greece or philosophic India, but to the childlike and immature Hebrew, first came the great idea of unity, the pivotal idea of the universe, of religion, science, art. In the highly developed fancy of the Greek the divine light was refracted into a rainbow; the simple reverence of the Hebrew gathered all the colors of the spectrum into white. To the Greek the difference between evil and good was as that

of one color from another; to the Hebrew it was as that of darkness from light.[16]

Now, this deepest of all thoughts, *unity*, was first taught, not in philosophic terms, but in the universal form of epic. Take the story of Abraham,[17] for example, which is in fact the story of the first emergence of the monotheistic idea, the first glimpse of the cosmical fact, unity. It is epic pure and simple. The lovely pastoral life, the clustered tents under the terebinths of Mamre, where the sheik from the far East, the father of his clan, lived peaceful and honored among the native peoples of a strange land — these are the property of epic. The story tells us not a word of the tremendous soul-struggle through which Abraham assuredly must have passed in his Chaldean home, when the impulse took possession of him, imperative as the voice of God, saying: "Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred and from thy father's house . . . . and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Only through Isaiah do we get a glimpse of it in his "Thus saith Jehovah who *redeemed* Abraham." [18] Here in Genesis all is simple, direct narrative — an utter absence of the subjective.

[16] If memory serves, I owe this expression of my thoughts to Miss Julia Wedgewood.

[17] Gen., chaps. 12–21. [18] Isa. 29: 22.

The *Iliad* has nothing more artlessly objective than the significant story of the coming of the three strangers to the patriarch's tent, the simple hospitality, the reverence just as simple, when Abraham discovers the divine nature of his guest. There is Greece and India and the Northland over again in the episodes of Gerar and Egypt, when the fatal beauty of the superficial and selfish Sarah so nearly wrecked the hope of the world. Then comes the heroic incident of the rescue of Lot: the sudden arming for war, when the news was brought Abraham that his clansman had become the innocent victim of a conflict between two great leagues of eastern potentates; the swift onrushing march at the head of his three hundred and ten retainers; the noble refusal to profit by the spoil of triumph. In the very spirit of the epic is the weak subservience of the hero to his womankind, in the household jealousies between the true wife and the slave-mother of the first-born son; the feminine disregard of consequences in the banishment of the slave-mother and her son, and the divine interposition, turning aside the natural consequences of this freak of jealous cruelty. Epic rises to its highest expression in the joy over the birth of Isaac and the averted tragedy of his sacrifice — but still it reads like Homer, and the noblest poet of the human race rises to no nobler flight than the twenty-second

chapter of Genesis. And it is in this epic story, external, objective, without introspection or analysis, that we find that revelation of unity, the one God, the one race in whom all nations of the earth were to be blessed, which lies at the basis of all the conclusions of modern philosophy, of all the half-grasped prophecies of modern science.

Still more of epic character has the story of Jacob,[19] with twice as much of religious character. The amazing truth of the power of man with God emerges from his story of Jacob's intriguing with his mother to secure his father's blessing, his far wandering to the ancient seat of his father's house, his beautiful love-story, his flight from Paddan-aram with all his flocks and herds and children, his fear of his brother Esau, his conflict with God. Nothing in the *Iliad* can surpass it, especially as the dark shadows gather over his later life. Read as plain history, there is much in Jacob's story to perplex us; that it has not more deeply perplexed us only shows how superficially and thoughtlessly we read the Old Testament. But read as an epic, as a part, and one of the most important parts, of the world's heritage of noble thoughts, it is full of power. Not that the story is not historical, but that it is more than historical; like Michael Angelo's

[19] Gen. 25: 20 — chap. 49.

Moses, it is of heroic mold, and has the higher truth of poetic inspiration.

The life of David [20] forms the connecting link between epic and history, but no life of which we have any knowledge is so eminently epical in its features. Into the secluded life of the shepherd boy of the Bethlehem hills breaks first the mysterious event of the prophet Samuel's visit and the anointing to some vague, unguessed-at career. Then comes the introduction to the court: the king, they say, is troubled with an evil spirit from Jehovah (it is always Jehovah who both makes peace and creates evil), and nothing can bring him quiet but such music as the shepherd lad knows best how to make. Then war breaks out; the hosts of Israel and of Philistia, intrenched on opposite heights alike impregnable, dare make no forward step on either side; while day by day the giant champion struts proudly across the narrow field that lies between, throwing his challenge to the people of the living God — until down from his hill pastures comes the young shepherd lad, and with the common weapon of his craft, a sling and a stone from the brook, lays low the enemy of his people.

The turn that this event gives to young David's fortunes is rather romantic than epical: the favor of the king; the love of the king's son Jonathan,

[20] 1 Sam. 16: 1 — 1 Kings 2: 11.

and the beginning of a friendship that has come down through history as passing the love of women; the love of the king's daughter Michal, and David's marriage with her as the reward of deeds of prowess; the generalship of the king's army; the enthusiastic admiration of the populace; the secretly growing jealousy of the king, leading to attempts at David's life; his repeated escapes; and finally his abandonment of the court and his last parting with his friend — a scene which for pathos and poetry is unmatched in all literature. Then comes the wild outlaw life — David and his band of hardy young condottiori seeking adventures, now on the wild steppes of the Devastation, now among the Philistines of the plain, now across the Jordan among his kindred of Moab, and again among the rocks and caverns of the hill country of Judah. In this story epic shades off into romance.

IV

All the Hebrew epics at which we have glanced are in prose. There is in the Old Testament no verse epic, but there is one of mingled prose and verse which is of matchless beauty — the story of Balaam. The three chapters, Num., chaps. 22–24, are a literary gem unsurpassed in the correctness and finish of both prose and poetry. They form a little book by themselves, and in a literary

study may properly be so considered. The Balaam story is more elaborately told, and more richly adorned with poetry, than any other of the Bible stories. At the same time, we must observe that the structure is eminently that of folklore, with its numeric system of three and seven. The purpose of the book is very striking; for at that early period[21] its meaning is the thoroughly modern idea of the unity of all mankind; only it is based, not on anthropology, but on God as its basis and Israel the unifying element, as was promised to Abraham: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blest."

Balaam himself is a grandly drawn figure, and not at all the vulgar deceiver that nearly all expositors make him out to be; partly from a misunderstanding of the remark in Deuteronomy that the children of Israel committed iniquity in Baalpeor according to the "counsel" of Balaam — a word which, in the fluid nature of language, has lost the meaning "oracle, prophecy," which it had when first used in this place.[22] Balaam is

[21] Early in this connection, at whatever period the chapters may be dated.

[22] How fluid our English language is, how easily words take on new meaning or lose their first significance, was strikingly brought to my knowledge by a lawyer of much oratorical fame. About twenty years ago, preparing a speech, he had occasion to use the word "humanitarian," in the sense which of recent years has become so familiar. To assure himself that he was justified in using it in such a sense, he turned to the then latest edition of a standard dictionary (Webster or Worcester, I forget which), and found there as the *only* definition of the word: "A Unitarian; one who denies the divinity of Jesus Christ."

a seer of such wide renown that his fame has spread from his far-distant home on the Euphrates to the wild tribes of the Midian desert and the untutored agriculturists of Moab. He is a diviner by profession, no doubt an astrologer, like many wise men of his country then and at a later day, that being as far as the science of the stars had yet been developed; but Balaam was no vulgar fortune-teller. He practiced divination as the highest of arts, and was by its means actually brought into communication with the true God, as the narrative explicitly informs us. It needs no scholarship to see from his own oracles that he was always faithful to the heavenly vision. Though his will was not in harmony with the will of God on this occasion, we observe that he never for a moment thought of resisting that will. He did earnestly attempt by prayers and sacrifices to change it, and he was severely reprimanded by the angel for his predetermination to change it if he could; but when at last he found it was not to be changed, he abandoned the struggle, fell in with the plan of God, and prophesied of Israel's future, the golden age of the chosen people, with a clearness and fulness of detail never surpassed by any later prophet.

The story, in its mechanical structure and frequent repetitions, gives evidence that this epic writer took it very much as he found it in the

folklore which always lies at the foundation of epic. The twice-repeated embassies of Balak, king of Moab; the answers of Balaam, as much alike as the progress of ideas admits; the threefold warning as he set out; even the medium by which one warning came — the ass — all have the freshness and feeling of genuine folklore. But the character of Balaam here drawn is not traditional. The figure before us is the creation of the epic writer, and an accurate reflection of the national spirit in some period of Israel's prosperity. Such a picture of a prophet out of Israel shows a universality to which only the greatest of Israel's prophets ever attained.

The prophetic poems show the national ideal: Israel, the specially beloved of Jehovah, who abides in his midst, and will cause the utter extinction of all who oppose him, and in particular of Moab, who at the time of the story was seeking his destruction — all this in a highly dramatic setting. The climbing of the steep ascent to the " high places of Baal," to " the field of the watchmen " on the top of Pisgah, to the peak of Peor, which looked toward Jeshimon, the Dry and Parched Land of the South Country of Canaan; the building of seven altars; the offering of seven bullocks and seven rams; the withdrawal of the seer away from altar and sacrifice to some " bare height " where he could meet God alone —

these are but the background of the "parable," not of the seer's desire, but of God's will:

> How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?
> And how shall I defy, whom Jehovah hath not defied?[23]

And again the second time:

> Behold, I have received commandment to bless:
> And he hath blessed and I cannot reverse it.
> He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob,
> Neither has he seen perverseness in Israel:
> Jehovah his God is with him,
> And the shout of a king is among them.[24]

And still a third time:

> How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob,
> Thy tabernacles, O Israel!
> As valleys they are spread forth,
> As gardens by the river side.
> As lign-aloes which Jehovah hath planted.
> As cedar trees beside the waters.[25]

The displeasure of Balak is all the greater for being complicated with superstitious fear. First he would check this unsatisfactory seer. "Neither curse them at all nor bless them at all," he exclaims; and again with bitterness which he does not try to conceal: "I thought to promote thee to great honor, but lo, Jehovah [Israel's God] hath held thee back from honor." But Balaam is now past caring for the honor of man. He has ceased to fight against God, and, yielding himself

[23] Num. 23: 8.
[24] Num. 23: 20, 21.
[25] Num. 24: 5, 6.

to the heavenly impulse, he utters a series of sublime prophecies, the far-reaching character of which would surely never have been vouchsafed to any prophet whose will was not in accord with God's will:

> I see him, but not now:
> I behold him, but not nigh:
> There shall come forth a star out of Jacob,
> And a sceptre shall rise out of Israel,
> And shall smite through the corners of Moab,
> And break down all the sons of tumult.[26]

He saw that the time would come when the surrounding nations — Moab, Edom, Amalek, the Kenites — should be no more; when Assyria, his own nation, would carry them all away. And then a vision rose before him which forced a cry of horror from his lips: "Alas! who shall live when God doeth *this!*"[27] For Assyria, too, was to be afflicted and come to destruction. No nation, no people, was to stand against that "one out of Jacob" who "should have dominion."

And so at last, unanswered and unreproved, Balaam, having uttered his message, goes back to his own home, and disappears from our sight. In another part of the book of Numbers we catch a glimpse of him which harmonizes little with what we have seen of him here; but with harmonizing Scripture we have not here to do. The

[26] Num. 24: 17. [27] Num. 24: 23.

epic story is a unit, perfectly self-consistent, and its meaning very clear — that Jehovah is the God, not of Israel only, but of all nations; and that in every nation he may speak for God whose will is one with the will of God.

Is it necessary here to point out to the devout Bible reader the value of recognizing the epic character of these stories? Assuredly it sets at rest those moral doubts, and those questions of physical possibility, which vex many earnest souls who read these stories as history. And it brings out, as they hardly have eyes to see who read them as history, the unique character of that inspiration which chose the poetry of epic to reveal high spiritual truths to minds too immature to find them in the literalness of history.

CHAPTER V

EASTERN LIGHT ON THE STORY OF ELISHA

I

A careful reading of chaps. 2–13 of 2 Kings suggests that these chapters are not arranged in chronological order. For example, in 5:23 we read: "So the bands of the Syrians came no more into the land of Israel." But in the very next verse we read: "And it came to pass after this that Ben-hadad, king of Syria, gathered all his host and went up and besieged Samaria." Evidently these two sentences cannot refer to the same time or to two closely consecutive periods of time.

So in 5:27 we learn that the curse of perpetual leprosy was pronounced upon Gehazi; but in the eighth chapter we find him conversing at length with the king, although it is hardly probable that a leper would be admitted to the presence of any Israelitish king. Again we may observe that all the remarkable deeds of Elisha appear to fall under the reign of Jehoram, which lasted only twelve years, although we know that Elisha lived more than forty years longer, into the reign of

Joash. And if, indeed, his activity ceased thus early in his life, it seems strange to find Joash in chap. 13 bewailing Elisha's approaching death as the loss of the strength of the nation, "the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof." Surely it would seem that a vigorous and valiant young monarch need hardly be overwhelmed with discouragement at the death of a man of more than eighty, who during forty very disturbed years had taken no part in the public life of the nation. These things, however, do not puzzle those who know that ancient Hebrew literary methods differ from those of modern writers, and that a care for historic sequence is not among them.

That the deeds of so remarkable a man as Elisha should have been well known to all the people, learned and unlearned, is just what we should expect. In an age when only a small learned class could read and write, the stories of Elisha's wonderful deeds must have circulated widely from lip to lip. Hundreds of years before the book of Kings was written — after the captivity, as we know, since it narrates the captivity — these stories had no doubt crystallized in much the form in which we have them. They must have been far more a part of common knowledge than the stories of King Alfred and the cakes, or George Washington and the cherry tree, are with us; for they were a part, not only of the

nation's history and literature, but of its spiritual heritage.

The writer of the book of Kings apparently had something of the modern spirit, so far as the search for authorities is concerned. He mentions a number of them — the books of the seers Gad and Iddo, the annals of the Kings, and others. Naturally he would be careful to collect the folk-stories about Elisha, as well as the incidents that were set down in the annals, and he appears to have been very religiously careful not to alter these old stories in the least. It had long been forgotten under which one of the six kings, whose reigns Elisha saw, this or that incident took place; and therefore, as will be observed, the king is never mentioned by name in any of these folk-stories: he is always simply "the king," and thus we are quite at liberty to give him whatever name a careful study shows us to fit the circumstances best.

II

Since scholars have found out how to decipher the inscriptions found on monuments and tablets and cylinders in the long-buried cities of the far East, in Assyria and Babylonia and elsewhere, we are beginning to find a very remarkable light shed upon the history of the Hebrew people. Two of these monuments, especially, bear upon the period covered by Elisha's life, and from

them, with some help from other inscriptions, we may gain such light as will enable us to rearrange the story of Elisha in chronological order, and merely by that rearrangement to bring out in a striking way the remarkable services which this great prophet and patriot rendered to his country.[1]

The two important monuments to which I allude are the Moabite Stone and the Black Obelisk. The former was discovered in 1868 A. D. by a German missionary near the ancient city Dibon (Dhiban) east of the Jordan. It is a stele of black basalt, bearing an inscription in Phœnician characters, in which Mesha, king of Moab,[2] pays homage to Chemosh, his god, for victories over his enemies. The Black Obelisk[3] is a monolith erected by Shalmaneser II of Assyria (860–825 B. C.) at Kurkh, among the mountains of Armenia. Upon it are recorded the many campaigns of this warlike and energetic monarch, who reigned thirty-five years from 860 B. C., that is, from the time of Ahab of Israel and Jehosaphat of Judah to the time of Jehu of Israel and

[1] Folklore is not history. Nevertheless a kernel of fact assuredly exists in each of these folk-tales about Elisha. Without assuming anything like historic accuracy for them, I have endeavored to place in its proper setting each fact that they enshrine. No reader can find it difficult to distinguish between the historic narrative which forms a part of these chapters and these folk-tales.

[2] 2 Kings 3: 4.

[3] Now in the British Museum. A cast of it is in the Metropolitan Museum in New York.

Joash of Judah, the period which begins in the book of Kings at 1 Kings 18:29, and ends at 2 Kings, chap. 16, although, as we shall see, it by no means covers all that is included in this section. Shalmaneser was one of the most doughty warriors of that warlike race which during this period was building up the great world-empire of Assyria. The dates of all the events recorded on his obelisk are now, accurately fixed, for among the discoveries is a series of tablets containing the *eponym calendar* of the Assyrians. The eponyms were officials who held office one at a time for a single year, and all the events of Assyrian history are entered in the cuneiform inscriptions under the name of the eponym then in office.

This eponym calendar extends over several hundred years; its place in chronology is fixed by an eclipse which occurred under one of the eponyms, and which is described with such accuracy and fulness that astronomers recognize it as one that took place in 763 B. C.

III

It was in the sixth year of Shalmaneser's reign (855 B. C.)[4] that, having made wide conquests on the eastward, the Assyrian king turned his steps westward to southern Syria, and it is here that he comes in contact with Hebrew history. North

[4] His reign was from 859 to 825 B. C.

and east of Israel's domain lay the new kingdom of Syria founded on the ruins of the great Hittite empire in Solomon's time by Rezon, an officer of the king of Zobah,[5] another small Hittite principality. Under the grandson of this Rezon, Ben-hadad I, Syria grew in strength, and most unwisely first Baasha of Israel, and afterward Asa of Judah, invoked Ben-hadad's help against each other.[6] But they soon learned the mistake of such a policy, for Ben-hadad not only overran Israel and annexed all the territory on the upper Jordan, and on the Sea of Chinneroth (Galilee as we now call it), but even invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem. This we gather from a careful comparison of the accounts in the Revised Version of Kings and Chronicles with certain recently discovered inscriptions.

The power of the Hebrew kingdoms being thus reduced by Syria, Judah and Israel learned that their true policy was to unite against this common foe. Even this would not have saved them but for the oncoming power of Assyria, which had now reached the Mediterranean, though still keeping to the north. An inscription of Asshur-nasir-pal, the father of Shalmaneser II, in 871 B. C., shows that he was aware not only of the existence of Damascus, the capital of Syria, but of "Omri Land," as Israel was called from its

[5] 1 Kings 11: 23, 24. [6] 1 Kings 15: 18, 19.

king, Omri, the father of Ahab; but it was not until the year 854, the sixth of Shalmaneser II, that an Assyrian army was led so far south as Damascus. This is how the Black Obelisk describes it:

In the eponymy of Dayan Asshur [854 B. C.] in the month Airu [May] on the fourteenth day, from Nineveh I departed, crossed the Tigris, to the cities of Giammu on the Balikh I approached. The fearfulness of my lordship (and) the splendor of my powerful arms they feared, and with their own arms they slew Giammu their lord [and submitted to him]. Kitlala and Til-sha-apli-akhi I entered, my gods I brought into his temples, I made a feast in his palaces. The treasury I opened, I saw his wealth; his goods and his possessions I carried away; to my city Asshur I brought (them). From Kitlala I departed, to Kar-Shulman-ashrid [a fort which he had built on a former campaign] I approached. In boats of sheepskin I crossed the Euphrates for a second time at its flood.

Then he enumerates the kings who submitted to him, and continues:

The tribute of the kings on that side of the Euphrates . . . . silver, gold, lead, copper, (and) copper vessels, in the city of Asshur-utir-asbat on that side of the Euphrates which (is) on the river Sagur, which the Hittites call Pitru, I received. From the Euphrates I departed, to Khalman I approached. They feared my battle (and) embraced my feet. Silver and gold I received as their tribute. Sacrifices I offered before Adad, the god of Khalman [modern Aleppo]. From Khalman I departed; two cities of Irkhulina, the Hamathite, I approached. Adenam, Mashga, Argana, his royal city, I captured . . . .

From Argana I departed, to Qarqar I approached. Qarqar, his royal city, I wasted, destroyed, burned with fire.[7]

Then he enumerates a long list of chariots, cavalry, and soldiers brought by the various allies of Dadda-idri (Ben-hadad II); among them 2,000 chariots, 10,000 soldiers of Ahab of Israel:

These twelve kings he [Ben-Hadad] took to his assistance; to make battle and war against me they came. With the exalted power which Asshur, the lord, gave me, with the powerful arms which Nergal [one of the great gods of Assyria] who goes before me had granted me, from Qarqar to Gilzan I accomplished their defeat. Fourteen thousand of their warriors I slew with arms; like Adad [the thunder-god] I rained a deluge upon them. I strewed hither and yon their bodies, I filled the ruins with their widespread soldiers, with arms I made their blood flow.[8]

This is the epoch-making battle of Karkar, which marked the beginning of the end of Syrian independence, and the beginning of the world-empire of Assyria. It took place in the year 854 B. C. Previous to this battle had occurred a war between Israel and Damascus, which ended in a disastrous defeat of Benhadad at Apek (1 Kings 20: 1–34,[9] 857 (?) B. C.). A three-years' truce was concluded between the two kings, and it was

[7] Rogers, *History of Babylonia and Assyria* (Eaton and Mains), II, pp. 75f.

[8] *Ibid.*, p 77.

[9] The figures in parentheses on this and the following pages show what appears to be the chronology of the events and the biblical account of the life of Elisha.

evidently during this truce that Ahab went as the ally of Benhadad to fight Shalmaneser at Karkar.

From the battle of Karkar we may approximately calculate the date when Elisha was called from his plow to the prophetic career by Elijah's throwing his mantle over him (1 Kings 19: 19, 855 (?) B. C.). Ahab died the year after the battle of Karkar, and his second son, Joram or Jehoram, apparently exercised the regency during the brief reign of his invalid brother Ahaziah. The revolt of Mesha, king of Moab, broke out immediately on Ahaziah's accession, and at the time of the campaign mentioned in 2 Kings, chap. 3, Elisha had been long enough a disciple of Elijah for the relation between them to be generally known.[10] It seems evident, therefore, that his call must have occurred not much before or after the battle of Karkar. At the time of his call he must have been a very young man, for he lived through the reigns of Ahaziah, Joram, Jehu, and Jehoahaz, and into the reign of Joash,[11] a period of at least sixty years. Elisha was a true borderman, like the Scottish borderers in early English history. His home was Abel Meholah on the Jordan. Expert in camp life, ambush, and scouting, deeply interested in the politics of his country, his border life having brought

[10] 2 Kings 3: 11. [11] 2 Kings 13: 14.

home to him the difficulties under which it labored by reason of the hostility of Syria, he was a patriot from the beginning, and his boyhood and young manhood were a true preparation for his prophetic career.

The early years after Elisha's call were spent in preparation of another kind. The last verse of 1 Kings, chap. 19, tells us that on being called by Elijah he at once went home with him and ministered to him, as Joshua to Moses, and Gehazi in later years to Elisha himself, being disciple and companion, as well as servant, of the prophet. They dwelt in the rocky seclusion of Mount Carmel, where the testing of Jehovah and Baal had taken place. We gather that this was Elijah's usual retreat, because he is bidden "go down" to meet Ahab after the slaughter of Naboth;[12] and when Ahab's son Ahaziah sends for him,[13] it is to "the top of the hill;" Elisha, we are told, "returned to Carmel" after Elijah's translation,[14] and he was still living there a good while later when the Shunamite went to him after her little son died.[15]

For several years the old prophet and his young disciple apparently lived together in strict retirement. Once and once only during this time Elijah emerges from his retreat; it is when Ahab

[12] 1 Kings 21: 18.
[13] 2 Kings 1: 9.
[14] 2 Kings 2: 25.
[15] 2 Kings 4: 25.

robs Naboth of his inheritance, and the stern prophet announces to him that for this act of injustice his dynasty shall not continue (1 Kings, chap. 21).

Apparently Benhadad's defeat by Shalmaneser at the battle of Karkar decided Ahab to break the truce and undertake to wrest from him the frontier post of Ramoth Gilead, so important all through the history of Israel (1 Kings 22:2–40, 853 B. C.). The interesting question arises how it came to pass that Ahab dared to war against Benhadad instead of combining with him against Assyria. We learn the answer from the Black Obelisk. It tells us that after the battle of Karkar, for three years, from 854 to 851, Shalmaneser II was occupied with an uprising of the tribes on the northern Tigris and in Babylonia, and so Damascus and Israel were relieved from fear of him and were at liberty to fight each other.

Ahab, having been mortally wounded at Ramoth in 853 B. C., was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, a man weak in body and apparently in mind (1 Kings 22:51). A comparison of dates makes it appear that, as has been said, his brother Joram was regent during Ahaziah's reign. During this brief period Elijah again comes into notice (2 Kings 1:1–17.). Ahaziah, having sent to Baalzebub, a Philistine god, to inquire

whether he would recover from an illness, receives a stern message of reproof from Elijah, and in consequence he attempts to take him and put him to death. In all this Elijah's young neophyte Elisha has no part.

Ahaziah reigned less than one year[16] (2 Kings 3:1, 853 B. C.), and his brother Jehoram or Joram ascended the throne. Both Ahab and Joram were in firm alliance with Jehoshaphat of Judah, who joined Joram in subduing the rebellion of Mesha, king of Moab. Moab had been made tributary by David, had rebelled, and had been subdued to the northern kingdom by Omri, Ahab's father. Mesha, the king, who was a man of large policy, had greatly increased the wealth, and probably the extent, of his kingdom, and he naturally took the occasion of Ahaziah's accession to refuse to pay the enormous tribute of a hundred thousand fleeces and a hundred thousand lambs which was annually exacted of him (2 Kings 3:4, 5). The detailed account on the Moabite Stone shows that during the long struggle which followed this rebellion Mesha made several raids into Joram's territory, at one time carrying off the "vessels of Jehovah" (probably from the sanctuary at Bethel), and offering them before Chemosh his God.

[16] The two years of 1 Kings 22:51 are parts of years, according to the invariable Jewish reckoning.

In the fifth year of Jehoram's reign, 849 B. C., Jehoshaphat of Judah died, and his son Joram began to reign (2 Kings 8:16–18). This king was both weak and wicked. He married Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, Ahab's wife and Jehoram's sister, and introduced Baal-worship into Judah. The news that Judah had gone over to Baal-worship came to the aged prophet Elijah, who had spent his life in warring against this very sin; he roused himself to a last protest and sent a letter to Joram of Judah, threatening him with a "great stroke" in punishment — a threat the fulfilment of which is narrated in the verses which immediately follow, telling of a raid of Philistines and the desert tribes, in which even Jerusalem was entered and all the king's wives and children carried away, except his youngest son (2 Chron. 21:12–15, 16–19).[17]

This letter was the last official act of Elijah, and his translation probably followed soon after (2 Kings 2:1–18). At this time Elisha received the special gift of prophetic power, and at once gave evidence of it by healing the bitter fountain near Jericho (2 Kings 2:19–22).

[17] The question how Elijah could send this letter so long after he was translated (this event having been narrated in 2 Kings, chap. 2, and Joram's accession not until 2 Kings, chap. 8) has long puzzled commentators. The various reasons given by the Sunday-school writers on this passage are little less than insulting to the intellect of any child. Whatever may have been the excuse for it before the chronology of this book of Kings was established, it exists no longer. The simple answer to the question is: Elijah was still alive.

The translation of Elijah must have occurred somewhere between 849 B. C., when Joram of Judah came to the throne, and 846 B. C. The reason for fixing it before 846 is this: The Black Obelisk shows that in 846 Shalmaneser again invaded Syria — this time with even more disastrous effect than before. Comparing this with the dates of the Moabite Stone, we may be pretty certain that Joram of Israel seized the happy moment when his most important foe, Benhadad of Damascus, was thus occupied, to make a general levy of all Israel and to call in his ally of Judah, with Judah's vassal Edom, to make a supreme attempt to give to the rebellion of Moab its deathblow (2 Kings 3:6–9).

On this occasion we gain the first glimpse of the intense patriotism which animated Elisha through the rest of his life (2 Kings 3:8–27). Released from his attendance upon Elijah by the translation of the aged prophet, he accompanied the army on the long desert march, evidently as self-appointed scout, for which his early training had fitted him, being unknown to anyone in authority, until, in the desperate straits of the three kings, someone remembered having seen him "pouring water on the hands of Elijah" — that is, ministering to that celebrated prophet. Being thus brought forward, Elisha's border experience no less than his

prophetic wisdom secured to the allied powers the victory over Moab. It is important to notice here that the attitude of Elisha toward Joram of Israel was one of distrust and dislike. He first refuses to have anything to do with him: "Get thee to the prophets of thy father and thy mother" (Baal prophets); and finally only consents to give counsel because of his respect for the king of Judah. This is important because the clue to Elisha's whole subsequent story is found in the relations between him and the reigning king, whoever he may be.

Not long after the final conquest of Moab, which, as has been seen, was a much longer struggle than the condensed account in chap. 3 might suggest, Elisha went to Damascus, to take the next step in fulfilling the charge laid by Jehovah upon Elijah in Horeb,[18] the anointing of Hazael to be king over Syria (2 Kings 8:7–15). It is evident that Elijah had bequeathed this duty to his disciple Elisha.

It will be observed that, to put this event in its proper historic place, we are obliged to pass over all that lies between chap. 3 and 8:7; that is, nearly the entire account of Elisha's active life. It is a question of dates, as we find them by comparing the Bible story with the Black Obelisk and other inscriptions. The last defeat of the

[18] 1 Kings 19:15, 16.

doughty old warrior Ben-hadad II at the hands of Shalmaneser took place, we have seen, in 846 B. C. Ben-hadad must have been very old by this time, for he began to reign in Omri's time. Now in 843, when Elisha came to Damascus, he was in failing health. Elisha's fame had preceded him, as was natural after his signal services in the conquest of Moab, and this gave him the opportunity to carry out his commission and announce to Hazael, Ben-hadad's chief captain, that he was to be king of Syria. We have, however, no reason to suppose that he suggested the hideous treachery by which Hazael proceeded to fulfil the prophecy [19] without waiting for the aged Ben-hadad to die in the course of nature.

It was in 843 B. C. that the ferocious and cruel Hazael murdered Ben-hadad and usurped his throne, doubtless with the aid of the army. Joram of Israel appears to have seized the opportunity of the internal disturbance of Damascus to attempt to recover some portion of Gilead, calling on his brother-in-law of Judah to help him (2 Kings 8: 28). In consequence of this, Hazael threw predatory troops into the district to weaken it by those atrocities which the prophet Amos describes [20] as "threshing Gilead with threshing instruments of iron." Edom, Judah's

[19] 2 Kings 8: 15. [20] Am. 1: 3.

ally, naturally seized this occasion to revolt (2 Kings 8: 20–22).

The great object of Joram's desire was that fortress of Ramoth in Gilead which plays so important a part in the history of Israel, the key to the country east of the Jordan. He now, in the early part of 842 B. C., sat down before it in a regular siege, having with him his ally and nephew, Ahaziah of Judah, who had succeeded his father (2 Kings 8: 28, 29). At Ramoth Joram of Israel was dangerously wounded, and, leaving the conduct of the siege in the hands of his chief captain, Jehu,[21] he returned to his capital Jezreel, whither Ahaziah shortly followed him. At this juncture Elisha executed the second commission inherited from his master Elijah, sending a member of the prophetic guild to Ramoth Gilead to anoint Jehu king (2 Kings 9: 1–14).

The story of the revolt of Jehu, the murder of Joram (2 Kings 9: 15–37), and the utter annihilation of Jezebel's descendants both in Judah and Israel (with the one exception of the infant Joash, who kept alive the Davidic line), and the extirpation of Baal-worship (2 Kings 10: 1–31), is of present importance as showing that the relations of Elisha to King Jehu were as friendly as those between him and Joram had been the reverse — a point which is of conse-

[21] Cf. 2 Kings 9: 25.

quence in settling the dates of the various incidents. Elisha, with reason, had great hope in Jehu at first, and naturally Jehu was grateful to the prophet through whose influence had come his exaltation. Elisha, whose interest was in the extirpation of Baal-worship, and the revival of true religion, as a matter of course lent all his influence to Jehu, at least in the beginning of his reign. It was not long, however, before it became evident that Jehu in many of his measures went far beyond the intentions of the prophet, committing such atrocities that Elisha could afterward designate his son as the son of a murderer,[22] and that the prophet Hosea sixty years later held him up to reprobation: "I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu." [23]

Nothing in the Bible account explains to us why the warlike Hazael did not improve the opportunity afforded by the disturbed state of Israel, consequent on Jehu's revolt, to overrun Samaria as well as Gilead; but the monuments tell us of a bit of statecraft on the part of Jehu which explains it. In this very year, 842 B. C., Shalmaneser II invaded Syria, and with such effect that Hazael lost 16,000 men, 1,121 war chariots, 470 horses, and his camp equipage, and was left in a particularly weak condition. The interesting point in the inscription from which we learn this

[22] 2 Kings 6: 32. [23] Hos. 1: 4.

is that Shalmaneser there mentions that he received tribute from Jehu, son of Omri. This is related, not on the Black Obelisk, but on a fragment lately discovered; it is, however, confirmed by the Black Obelisk, on which is found a sculptured representation of ambassadors bearing gifts to the Assyrian king, with an inscription: "Tribute of Jehu, son of Omri." It was a natural mistake to suppose that the rule of Israel was still in the hands of the Omri dynasty; the important thing is that, as there is no hint either in the Bible or on the monuments of any invasion of Israel by Shalmaneser II, it is evident that this tribute was not the enforced result of conquest by the Assyrian king, but the voluntary act of the astute military commander, at this time king of Israel (Jehu), who must thus have invoked the intervention of Assyria to save him from an invasion by Hazael, which would have been fatal to him in this first year after he had usurped the kingdom.

Thanks to this policy, Hazael was kept busy by Assyria. Thus the internal affairs of Israel appear to have settled themselves promptly, and the first years of Jehu's reign to have been marked by domestic quiet. It was during these peaceful years, while Elisha was still living on Carmel, that occurred one of the most beautiful

incidents of his life — that of his friendship with the family of Shunem (2 Kings 4:8–37).

The reasons for placing this incident here are three, slight in themselves, but sufficient. The prophet was living on Mount Carmel. It was therefore either in the reign of Joram or the early years of Jehu; for during Jehu's later years Elisha removed to Samaria, apparently to be nearer the king, who by that time needed the restraining hand of the prophet. Elisha was not only in friendly relations with the king (which we know he was not with Joram),[24] but in a position to ask a favor of him for his friend the Shunamite,[25] which Jehu's indebtedness to Elisha would warrant. The time is evidently a time of peace — a child could go alone into the fields,[26] a woman could take a solitary ride across the country with no fear of roving bands of soldiers, either Israelite or Syrian.[27] No period except that between the successful close of Jehu's revolt and Hazael's more aggressive hostilities meets the case, and this period appears to meet it perfectly.

Three years after the Jehu revolution, in 839 B. C., while these events were going on, Shalmaneser again invaded Syria, and according to his own inscriptions defeated Hazael. It was

[24] Cf. 3:13, as already pointed out.
[25] 4:13.
[26] 4:18.
[27] 4:22.

probably, however, a drawn battle, for not only did Assyria gain no territory, but no further invasion of Syria took place during the life of Shalmaneser II, though he lived fifteen years longer.

This left Hazael free to begin a series of operations against Israel, which kept that country in continued distress, and brought Elisha into prominence as the first of patriots and the counselor of the king (2 Kings 10:32–33).

If by the tribute he paid Assyria in 842 Jehu had expected to secure permanent help from Shalmaneser II, he soon found himself mistaken. Hazael's guerrillas not only overran Gilead, always the scene of frontier warfare since the days of Omri, but even made raids into Samaria.[28]

These repeated raids were very disastrous to Israel. In the destruction of growing crops and personal property the country became very poor. This is precisely the condition that we find described in three stories of Elisha's life: that of the ax-helve (2 Kings 6:1–7), which in their poverty the sons of the prophets had borrowed to make them a booth to live in, which fell into the water, and which Elisha made to swim; and the two incidents at the close of chap. 4 — the pottage made from poison weeds, which Elisha rendered innocuous, and the multiplication

[28] Cf. 6:8, 13, 20.

of the first-fruits offered to the prophetic community, making twenty barley loaves and some ears of wheat suffice for a hundred people (*2* Kings 4: 38–41 and 42–44). The three incidents appear to show an ever-deepening poverty in the order here assigned to them.

Poverty caused by hostile raids is almost sure to develop the incipient tendency of the rich to oppress the poor, which by the time of the prophet Amos had reached its culmination,[29] the rich selling the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes, and covetously panting for the very dust of the earth on the heads of the poor. And here appears to be the place for the story of the prophet's widow, whose son would have been sold for debt but for the multiplication of the oil in her cruse (*2* Kings 4: 1–7). Meanwhile the inroads of Hazael were becoming bolder, penetrating to the very heart of the country, destroying crops and causing so bitter a famine that even the well-to-do Shunamite was advised by Elisha to take refuge in Philistia (*2* Kings 8: 1, 2).

Shalmaneser II died in 825 B. C., and was succeeded by his son Šamši-Adad. This prince was fully occupied during the first seven years of his reign in strengthening his rule over the wide regions conquered by his father, and during the

[29] Am. 2: 6, 7.

last five by the open rebellion of several of his principal cities, including Nineveh. He never went westward at all, and Hazael therefore had it all his own way with Israel. And yet not quite that (2 Kings 6:8–13). Again and again, when Hazael had plotted to lay an ambush against Jehu's troops,[30] he found that someone had warned the king, and the soldiers of Israel had avoided the trap. The account of his perplexity, his conversation with his servants, and his discovery that his true enemy was the old prophet Elisha,[31] who had long ago announced to him that he was to be king over Syria, is very dramatic. The relations between Elisha and the king of Israel as here shown, and the deep interest of the prophet in public affairs, all point to the reign of Jehu. The conclusion of hostilities between Syria and Israel was due to Elisha's generosity (2 Kings 6:14–23). At the siege of Dothan, when Elisha showed his servant Gehazi the mountains full of heavenly chariots and horsemen, Elisha by a stratagem led the Syrians directly into the hands of Jehu in Samaria. It was the generosity with which, at Elisha's request, Jehu spared this band of invaders, that led to peace between Israel and Syria, so that, as we are told in the twenty-third verse,

[30] The meaning of the word "camp" in vs. 8.

[31] Here again we find Elisha a self-appointed scout.

"the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." This must of course be understood as applying only to the reign of Jehu, not to all future time.

It is this statement, made in vs. 23 of this chap. 6, which, as will be remembered, appears to be directly contradicted by vs. 24, saying: "And it came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad, king of Syria, gathered all his host and went up and besieged Samaria." We shall come to the siege of Samaria at a later point. The next passage in the order of time after the peace of 6:23 comes in chap. 13.

The death of Jehu had occurred during this peace, and he was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:1–2). Jehoahaz proved to be a bad king, but in the quiet time of his early reign (the bands of the Syrians coming no more into the land of Israel), the Shunamite, who had remained away seven years, returned to Israel and found that her property had been seized by some of those covetous rich who became so numerous in the time of Amos (2 Kings 8:3–6). With much of his father Jehu's valor, Jehoahaz had none of his zeal for religion, and Elisha appears to have retired entirely from the court; for when the Shunamite came to beg for the restoration of her property, the king was inquiring of Gehazi, Elisha's servant, as to the

great things that Elisha had done. This was a fortunate coincidence for the Shunamite, since Gehazi was able to substantiate her claim.

The peace between Syria and Israel did not last very long beyond the death of Jehu, and the reign of Jehoahaz was full of troubles. With all his valor, mentioned in the summing up of his career,[32] he was powerless to cope with Hazael, who now resumed hostilities, and, having swept over and annexed the entire eastern country as far south as the Arnon, not only raided Israel, carrying away many captives — among them a little maid of whom we shall soon hear (2 Kings 5:2) — but made the plain of Jezreel itself the base of his operations against both Philistia and Judah. He actually invested Jerusalem, and was bought off only by Joash of Judah giving him the treasures of his own palace and of the temple (2 Kings 12:17, 18).

All this must have occurred in the early years of Jehoahaz, because four years after his accession, in 811 B. C., Adad-nirari III came to the throne of Assyria and began that aggressive movement which thenceforth hardly ceased until the capture of Israel eighty-nine years later. In the records, Adad-nirari III boasts of conquering Tyre, Sidon, Omri-Land (Israel), Edom, and Philistia. Before his aggressions have reached

[32] 2 Kings 13:8.

this point we may place the beautiful story of Naaman (2 Kings 5: 1–27), who owed his cure from leprosy to the little captive maid of Israel. The story in Kings is put early in Elisha's life, but it belongs here by various tokens. Naaman was chief captain of the king of Syria; but he cannot have been the chief captain of Ben-hadad II, for Hazael was that. He must have been Hazael's chief captain. The "deliverance" which the Bible tells us that he accomplished for Syria must have occurred before his leprosy, and there is no good reason to question that he was the general in that drawn battle of 839 by which, as we have already seen, more than twenty years of amnesty from Assyrian invasion had been secured to Syria. The king to whom Naaman was sent cannot have been Jehu, because, with all his victories over Jehu, Hazael was never on such terms with him as to be in a position to send to him such peremptory orders, especially during the last years of his reign, when, as we have seen, the peace between them was the result, not of Hazael's prowess, but of Jehu's generosity.[33] Only one in the beaten condition of Jehoahaz[34] could have been so terrified by the idea that the Syrian king sought a quarrel with him.[35] Besides this, Jehu would have known at once that Elisha was the prophet referred to, whereas we

[33] 6: 20–23. [34] 13: 3–7. [35] 5: 7.

have just seen how little Jehoahaz knew of Elisha. Moreover, the leprosy of Gehazi, which resulted from this incident, could hardly have occurred before the reign of Jehoahaz, because, if Gehazi had been a leper, he could hardly have been talking with King Jehoahaz when the Shunamite woman came in.[86]

Hazael's reign had extended from 843 or 844 B. C., to nearly the close of the century, and the last we hear of him is his sending Naaman to Israel, except that in a general way he oppressed Israel all his life.[87] The next event in the history is the siege of Samaria (2 Kings 6:24—7:20). It occurred under Hazael's son Ben-hadad III,[88] but during the reign of Jehoahaz, which closed in 799 B. C. Jehoahaz, as we know, had already lost several cities to Syria during Hazael's reign. The loss of Samaria would have been the destruction of Israel. The army was demoralized to a marvelous degree; 2 Kings 13:7 tells us that Jehoahaz had only fifty horsemen and ten chariots and 10,000 infantry — a striking contrast to the 2,000 chariots Ahab had been able to lend to the alliance with the second Ben-hadad. We are concerned with the siege of Samaria only as showing the unfriendly relations between the king and Elisha, who, however, was still

[86] 2 Kings 8:4. [87] 13:22. [88] Vs. 24.

living in Samaria,[39] whither he had removed in Jehu's time. They are indeed so unfriendly that many scholars still think this siege must have taken place under Joram, the son of Ahab. But, bad as things were at that time, they were in nothing like the condition here described, nor does anything in Joram's time either in the Bible or in the monuments go to explain the remarkable deliverance by which this siege was raised. But the inscriptions of Adad-Nirari III appear to explain it. We are told in 7:6 that in the last extremity, when famine made surrender seem imminently necessary, the Syrians heard a report that a body of horsemen and chariots and a great host were coming against them, and were so terrified by it that they fled, leaving all their camp and baggage behind. Now, in chap. 13, which sums up the oppressions of Syria under Jehoahaz, we are told[40] that the Lord gave Israel a savior, who was so efficient in restoring peace that the warlike footing which had been that of Israel during a long past was entirely done away with. Who that savior was has been questioned for two thousand years. The best answer that could be found was Jeroboam II (the answer still given by many very competent authorities, and very clearly the opinion of the writer of this history.[41] But this answer is

[39] 6:32. [40] 13:5. [41] 14:26, 27.

hardly satisfactory, as the reign of Joash (sixteen years) comes between Jehoahaz and this king. The monuments appear to give a better suggestion as to the identity of this savior. In 806 B.C., and again in 803, and finally in 799, Adad-nirari III of Assyria came up against Syria, and of all his many conquests it was his proudest boast that at this time he utterly subdued Damascus. It was the intelligence of one of these important invasions that made the forces of Benhadad III so precipitately raise the siege of Samaria.

In 799 Jehoahaz was succeeded by his son Joash (2 Kings 13:10). Evidently the memory of Elisha's intervention in the siege of Samaria was yet fresh, for we find Joash regarding him with reverent admiration. But Elisha was now very old. He had been laboring for Israel nearly sixty years, and the time of his death had come (2 Kings 13:14–19). The last incident in his story is the visit of King Joash, coming to see him on his death-bed, and crying in utter despair: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and the horsemen thereof!" Elisha's patriotism was burning as brightly in his death as ever in his life: his one thought in this interview was for the victory of Israel over their age-long foe. Syria had been put to tribute by Assyria, but its power was not yet broken; it

needed but a little perseverance on the part of Joash to defeat it utterly. So far, indeed, was it weakened that the Moabites, for a time under the Syrian yoke, now undertook raids on their own account (2 Kings 13:20). And so far as the energy of Joash carried him he was victorious. Three times he conquered Ben-hadad and recovered the cities his father had lost. There his operations ceased (2 Kings 13:25). In 797 Assyria came once more and so completed the conquest of Syria that it never again offered hostilities to Israel.

V

Thus much had Elisha accomplished by sixty years of arduous service. He had kept hope and energy alive under most disastrous circumstances, until the tide of Israel's fortune's turned (2 Kings 14:25–28). After the prosperous reign of Joash, his son Jeroboam II carried the kingdom to a state of power and prestige such as it had hardly known even in Solomon's day. But the old prophet's vision was clear after all. Joash blundered sadly in not himself completing the conquest of Syria instead of letting it fall into the hands of Assyria. So long as Syria stood between Samaria and the all-encroaching world-power Assyria, Israel's independence was secure, but with Syria in the possession of the ruler of

Nineveh, the captivity of Israel was only a question of time.

It is a very common opinion that Elisha was greatly inferior to Elijah. Those who care little for miracles see in his story only a sort of fairy-tale, good to tell to children, but unworthy the attention of men. Elijah was so ardent, so single-hearted in his opposition to Baal-worship; "this one thing I do" was so evidently his motto, that he stands very high among reformers, though not a more lovable character than some other reformers. Elisha was a man of entirely different stamp, a very charming character, warm-hearted, genial, full of tact, delighting in the companionship of woman, affectionate, grateful. He was all this, but he was far more than this. True patriot, far-seeing statesman, loyal subject, his career was one of incalculable benefit to his country. He was the first patriot — I had almost said *Christian* — the world knows of; at least he was the first whose patriotism was his religion and his religion patriotism. Of all Old Testament characters his life is a lesson for the present day, and I cannot think that study merely a bit of ingenious problem-working which makes so clear the sequence of his deeds as to show their connection with the great world-movement of his time.

CHAPTER VI

LOVE-STORIES OF ISRAEL

I

The holiest thing we know is love. The relation between God and man is a love-relation. It is because of love that the law of the universe is the law of vicarious sacrifice — the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world; all things perpetually giving themselves that a better thing may be. Love is the foundation of the righteousness of God, or, rather, love is its very heart: in wrath he remembers mercy because his wrath *is* mercy, since he is love.

But how shall God reveal himself to man as love? The human mind and heart, though expanded to their utmost capacity by an answering love, cannot compass the knowledge of that which needed a universe for its satisfaction and an eternal sacrifice for its expression. Only in part can such a revelation be given to man, and also only *in parts*. If because of our finite understanding it was necessary that God should at divers times and in divers manners give the revelation of himself to man in the various aspects

of his being and will, inconceivably more necessary is it that this revelation of that which epitomizes them all — *love* — should be given us, part by part, aspect by aspect; that, viewing it now on this side, now on that, now in one relation, now in another, we may finally come to some apprehension of the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of God which passeth knowledge.

Therefore the Old Testament is full of love-stories; and the stories are of all kinds — not only of lover and lover, husband and wife, but of father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister, friend and friend. In all these relations love finds in the Old Testament of all literature its best illustration, because of all literature it is in the Old Testament simplest and least self-conscious. When we read its books with this idea in mind, we find love flashing out from many a page, and softly lambent in many a character, where we have hardly been aware of it before. Fierce or gentle, cruel or kind, selfish or devoted, all the men and women of Israel are lovers. Sometimes their love is so pure and flawless as to seem almost worthy to be a type of the divine reality; sometimes it is but "broken lights" of that reality, yet still the stories of these loves suggest, and in their own way interpret, that perfect love which is "more than they."

We come to the study of the love-stories of the Bible in a period, and from the midst of an environment, most unsympathetic to such a study. There are very few of us who have wholly escaped the influence, on the one hand, of the erotic novel, and on the other, of the materialistic psychology and anthropology of our time. There cannot but be an element of grave danger in the scientific study of human relationships. However important and however seriously made, it tends to deaden the spiritual sense. The erotic novel tends to brutalize it; and we need to be careful in either line of reading lest we injure the idealizing faculty which is the very nerve of the soul.

It is because this faculty is already more or less weak that we do not feel at once the beauty of the Bible love-stories, so sane and simple and safe, making no appeal to our self-consciousness. It takes a little time, and perhaps not a little effort, for us to get into a frame of mind — or of heart — where we can respond to their normal and natural appeal. But when the scientific study of ancient institutions and primitive peoples has made us feel as if the original relations of father and daughter, husband and wife, had been only barter and sale, pursuit and capture, tyranny and slavery; or when the psychological novel has shown us the divine law of love changed into the

cruel despotism of desire, and conscience a blind and bewildered guide, it is clarifying and refreshing to turn to these pages, and read how, in the early days of Hebrew story, Rebekah went of her own free will to the unseen husband beyond the desert and the river; how Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and it seemed but a few days for the love he bore her; how Elkanah comforted his childless wife with the tender question: "Am not I better to thee than ten sons?" how the young heathen girl was fain to leave country and father's house for love of the woman whom her dead husband had called mother; how Jonathan, the single-hearted, kept faith with father and with friend; how the fierce warrior Jephthah, tender only to his idolized daughter, yet shrank not from doing to her according to his vow, obeying with true instinct, though with benighted heart, that high law which bids man give the best he has to the best he knows. And there is still no story of today, however passionately true, no poem of our own time, however noble its utterance of love, no Sonnet from the Portuguese, no Guinevere or Maud, that so meets the imperative demand of the heart for self-expression as that "oldest and sweetest love-song of the East," the "Song of all Songs, which is of Solomon;" where the fresh breezes of the vineyard blow through halls of oriental splendor; where the birds are always

singing and the time is always spring, while a love strong as death is battling with fierce temptation and wins victory at last without a scar.

These love-stories of Israel, we remember, were lived — or dreamed — in a period of the world's civilization when the relations of men and women were almost everywhere relations of tyranny and sensuality; their scene is that Orient where in all ages love has been a thing of voluptuous self-gratification. These love-stories are from the East and from an early literary period; but in them love is not a thing of the senses, nor is the relation between husband and wife a property-relation. The love they reveal is a true type, however inadequate, of the love of God; and the relation of husband and wife is so truly a love-relation that prophets could bring messages of reproof for Israel's wandering from God in figures taken from the transgression of the marriage vow, and picture the divine favor in figures drawn from wedded love:

> Thy Maker is thine husband, Jehovah of Hosts is his name.[1]

II

Love-stories so pure and natural as these Bible love-stories are true idylls. There is always the free breath of the open air, the underlying consciousness of hills and valleys, or of wide desert

[1] Isa. 54: 5.

sweeps and of the overarching sky. The tinkling of sheep-bells blends with the song of the reapers and the measured footfall of the vintage dance. There is never any introspection, and the stories are without the slightest shade of psychological analysis; but the feeling is intense. There is no lack of passion in the love-stories of the Bible, though from its very purity the flame is often invisible. To the student or the maker of literature these love-stories are particularly worthy of study; in how few words is the story told, and yet how distinctly the characters stand out, each as completely unlike the other as in the most carefully analyzed work of modern fiction.

And if no two lovers are alike in all these Bible stories, still less is the love they represent of any conventional type. If the inspired authors had set themselves to show the manifold phases of love, they could not have done it with more consummate art. Isaac's love for Rebekah was the natural outgrowth of the loneliness of the idolized son, left desolate by the death of the doting mother who had made life easy and lovely for him; and the capable, energetic, not over-emotional Rebekah was just the sort of wife such a man would like best. But Jacob and Rachel were lovers of another sort. In them the intense devotion of youth was strengthened by long trial and nourished by bitter disappointment.

The love of David and Michal was the true boy-and-girl love, artless, spontaneous, not robust enough to bear the test of untoward circumstances, but beautiful while it lasted. When, after years of rude experiences, David met the wise, self-poised, and tactful Abigail, matured but not embittered by the cruel lot of being wedded to a fool, the story is of that deep affection which without romance yet makes very much of the dignity and worth of married life. And then there is the love of Shelomith, the peasant girl of the Song of Songs — the typical woman's love; beginning, like Michal's, in the artless unconsciousness of youth, and beautiful with the exuberance of girlish spirits, but, unlike hers, gaining strength by trial, and coming at last to self-consciousness through a fiery ordeal that would have shriveled to nothingness a less genuine passion. It is marvelous art that can bring out all these fine shades of difference, not only without analysis, but almost without conversation, which is only a more obvious method of analysis. A two-volume novel of the realistic school is vague and sketchy in comparison with these. With all Mrs. Ward's power, we hardly know Marcella as we know Rachel, and Ruth is a real person where Diana of the Crossways is only a type.

Instead of analysis, the love-stories of the Bible give us presentation; instead of psychology,

the idyll — short, intense, with no self-consciousness, but with nature-consciousness always there. For example, the story of Isaac and Rebekah;[2] it is no less evidently a love-story though the lover himself hardly appears upon the scene. It is natural enough that the marriage is arranged by an intermediary; that is what we find in most eastern stories; the difference is that in this case the matchmaker's whole heart is in his business — it is not a mere professional matter. The match-maker is the trusted slave, Eliezer of Damascus, born in Abraham's house, and in his youth the presumptive heir of Abraham's wealth; and the keynote of love is struck at once when a man in his position feels it almost as much a matter of importance as does the father that the son of promise shall be suitably mated.

The idyllic features are present from first to last; in hardly any work of modern times is the nature-consciousness so strong. It makes a part of the tenderness that enhaloes the scene of the solemn oath, where Eliezer swears to seek for his master's son a wife of that Mesopotamian kindred whence long ago Abraham had come out. It has its share in the anxious affection which burdens the bondsman's heart during the long journey eastward from the home at Hebron, where in the cave of the field that mother lies buried to

[2] Gen., chap. 24.

whom the son Isaac was so dear! It mingles with the almost mother-love that fills the heart of the faithful slave as he leads his caravan, laden with gifts for the unknown bride, along the high ridges of Mount Judah, past the fortress and shrine of Salem and under the ladder-like rocks of Bethel, beyond Shechem and the oaks of Moreh, through the green valley of Jezreel and along the plain of Esdraelon, beneath the shadow of Tabor's dome and beside Chinneroth's blue expanse, under Hermon's snowy height and across the pathless desert, until at last it finds words in the prayer offered beside the well of Harran.

Then comes a scene of pure idyll. The group of camels kneeling by the well; the man bent forward in the eastern attitude of prayer; the girl coming over the rolling upland with her pitcher on her shoulder — it is the poetry of all the ages, and one may see it today in any eastern village. Very eastern are the methods of Eliezer's approach to the young girl's heart. Even the prayer in which he arranges for his own guidance from heaven by a sign has in it something of eastern diplomacy, and still more so the production of gifts at the opportune moment — the bracelets and the nose-ring brought out precisely when he had said enough to excite, without in the least gratifying, Rebekah's girlish curiosity as to the object of his long journey. It is diplo-

macy not less than loyalty to his master that makes him refuse to eat until he has told his errand. That was just the way to capture the heart of the fearless Mesopotamian girl, with her readiness to take the initiative.

All this is eastern, but it is the East, not of Persia or Arabia, but of Israel. Spirited and stout-hearted as Rebekah was, there was more in her quick decision, "I will go," than mere independence. She knew the story of how Abraham had left this home in Harran in answer to a mysterious call. She must have known something of the promise on which he built his hope. It was the choice of a high destiny that Rebekah made when she went away with Eliezer to be Isaac's wife and take her place in the line of blessing to the world. And still she was a genuine girl through it all; as we see when the day came at last that she lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac walking slowly toward her across the field, plunged in "mournful meditation," thinking of the dead mother who had left such a void in his life, looking out, too, with an expectation half timorous, half glad, for the wife who was to comfort him for his mother's loss. All the girlish instinct spoke in Rebekah's quick veiling of her face; but when she dismounted from her camel, and waited until Isaac should come and lead her into his dead mother's tent, it was with

the dignity of the woman who submits to love because it is her free choice. And so the little idyll closes with a glimpse of that oldest and not least worthy type of wifely love — the love that is half maternal, half protecting and consoling — in the brooding warmth of which Isaac was comforted for his mother's death.

Jacob's love-story is very different from that of his father Isaac.[3] Not peaceful and comforting, but stormy and intense, is the idyll of his life. No intermediary seeks out a bride for him, traveling on camels and laden with gifts. Alone and on foot he makes the same journey that Eliezer had taken long before; his heart, like Eliezer's, is anxious, but it is not the anxiety of love, but of a disturbed conscience — for he is seeking, not a bride, but a refuge from the wrath of an offended brother. Love visits him a sweet, unbidden guest, when Rachel comes leading her father's flocks to water, over the field which that other girl, her own father's sister, had crossed a generation back, to meet a more prosperous, but not a more blissful, fate.

The course of their love ran smooth enough at first. The penniless youth must indeed buy his wife with seven years of labor, but Rachel was there, and every day was golden with the glory of youthful love. Three times was that love victo-

[3] Gen. 28: 10 — 35: 20.

rious — over cruel deceit, over unjust treatment, and over the blighting disappointment of childlessness — more severe a test than any but an oriental knows. Jacob's devotion never transferred itself from Rachel to Leah. Though Leah was a bright and patient woman, and the mother of six sons, the love of Jacob for Rachel is always in evidence. When danger threatened from Esau's wrath, on the homeward journey from Mesopotamia, and Jacob with deep anxiety made his preparations to meet him, Rachel and her son were put last, in the place of greatest security. Joseph, Rachel's late-born son, was Jacob's best-beloved because his mother was the beloved of his youth; and Benjamin, the child for whom she gave her life, was entwined with his father's very heart-strings. There is all the pathos of a deathless grief in the story how it "came to pass as her soul was in departing (for she died) that she called him 'the son of my sorrow;' but his father called him 'the son of the right hand.'"

No such stormy love was that of Ruth — her story is rather pastoral than idyllic, so sweet and peaceful and outward is it all.[4] Indeed, it is not the love between Ruth and Boaz which is the subject of the lovely story, still less the love of the young Moabitish girl for the boy-husband so

[4] Ruth, *passim*.

early taken from her. The story of Ruth is the seldom-told story of the love and loyalty of two women. That it should have found a place in the Bible is very impressive when we consider how small account would be made of the friendship of women among any eastern people except Israel, at any period of time; and it is still more impressive because the relationship between these women — that of mother-in-law and daughter-in-law — here so dignified and pathetic and mutually protective, is the relationship that at all times and in all countries has been held up for derision, suspicion, or scorn.

The story of Ruth was evidently written by one who delighted in folklore and desired to preserve a memory of the old customs — the levirate marriage, the plucking off the shoe, the important functions of the elders sitting in the gate, the primitive ways of wooing. The stratagem of Naomi to secure a wealthy and influential husband for Ruth was very daring, but we may be sure that some such custom prevailed at that time. It argues an entire lack of appreciation of the character, not only of Naomi, but of Ruth, to suppose, as many commentators have done, that Naomi's purpose in sending Ruth to lie at the feet of Boaz, as he slept upon the threshing-floor after the joyous festival of the harvest home, was so to compromise him that, being an honorable

man, he would feel bound to offer marriage to the unprotected girl. Such an explanation of a puzzling situation is far too modern to be satisfactory, even if what we knew of Ruth did not make it unthinkable. We must put ourselves far away from our late western civilization to the distant East and the long past, and, realizing Naomi's strong love for Ruth, and the impracticability of single life for a young woman in those turbulent "days when the judges ruled," [5] find it natural that she should take advantage of a local custom to bring home to the consciousness of the prominent citizen, who was her kinsman, and who already recognized the virtues of Ruth, the fact of the young widow's unprotected condition.

It was on this same Mount Judah that another love-story occurred, of which the hero was the most brave, gallant, and fiery of all the sons of Israel, and the heroine the most dignified, wise, and tactful of his daughters.[6] The story of how the Hebrew Robin Hood, the outlaw David, won his maid Marian, is highly interesting for the picture it gives of the manners of the time; but chiefly and especially for the noble type of womanhood it portrays. Abigail, wife of "the fool," Nabal, is such a fearless, self-possessed, gracious woman as is not often met. Not in all the Old

[5] Ruth 1: 1. [6] 1 Sam., chap. 25.

Testament, hardly in all eastern literature, is there another recorded speech of woman so dignified, appropriate, and winning as the words Abigail addressed to David to restrain him from avenging himself with his own hand. There is all the loyalty of the wife who, though mated with a clown, is yet true to him. "Upon me, my Lord, upon me be the iniquity, for my husband is not accountable, being Nabal — a fool." There is all the fearlessness of the woman who, though in danger, is mistress of the situation, able to remind the freebooting chieftain how unworthy of him it would be to avenge himself with his own hand. There is all the discretion and tact of a woman entirely mistress of herself and perspicacious as to the character of him to whom her plea was addressed, in her promise that when at last better days should have dawned — David's soul "bound in the bundle of life with Jehovah, and the souls of his enemies slung out by God as from the hollow of a sling" [7] — then "this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offense of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless or that my lord hath avenged himself."

III

These love-stories are idylls. The love-story of Shelomith in the Canticles is a drama; whether

[7] 1 Sam. 25: 29. There is a delightful and most tactful reference here to David's victory over Goliath.

founded on fact or a pure work of the imagination we have no other means of discovering than the literary canons by which we decide upon the character of other works of literature. But for the purpose for which it was written it makes no difference. The marvelous tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* does not owe its transcendent value to the fact that the Montagus and Capulets actually lived and were at enmity, but to the truth of its revelation of love. So with the Song of Songs: its meaning is of the highest possible value, and whether or not Shelomith actually lived and was wooed by Solomon is not of so much importance as the fact that in an age like that, in a part of the world where to belong to the king's harem was the highest aspiration of woman, the triumph of true love over all the blandishments of a king and his court could be sung by any poet, and an ideal like this held up before the women of Israel.

Some of my readers are perhaps surprised to hear that this is the meaning of the poem, which they may have held to be an allegory of the love between Christ and his church. But we are not here concerned with the mystical interpretation or spiritual application of the Bible books, but with their primary meaning, as a thing to be discovered by a study of their literary form.

The literary form of the Song of Songs is not by any means a matter on which all students are

agreed. The more carefully I apply to it the canons of Hebrew poetry, so far as I understand them, the more certain does it appear to me that it is a drama; but I began this study sharing the conviction of the majority, perhaps, of commentators that this is not a drama at all, but a collection of amœbean lyrics, like Tennyson's *Maud*, for instance, and with only the slightly dramatic character of the changes of scene and of states of feeling which we find in such a poem as *Maud*. But careful study of the poem has compelled a change in my opinion.[8]

Still it would be a mistake to compare the Song of Songs with an English drama; still more of a mistake perhaps to compare it with the Greek drama. None of my readers, probably, have ever seen a performance in the Hebrew theater in the Bowery, New York, or elsewhere, but they may have heard something about it. In certain important respects those performances are more like a Wagner opera, minus the music, than like a Shakespearean play — at least the interminable

[8] Although the ancient Hebrews had no theater, their dramatic instinct was very strong, and early developed. As Duhm points out (*Encyclopædia Biblica*, art. "Poetry"), dramatic elements entered into their temple service (cf. Ps. 24) as well as their mournings, and especially their wedding festivals. To this day weddings in Palestine have a highly marked dramatic character. This "Song of All Songs" may have been a favorite entertainment in Israel's palmy days, during the week-long (Gen. 29: 8; Judg. 14: 12, 17) marriage festivals of the great. Syrian schoolgirls today delight in nothing more than "playing wedding," which they do in highly dramatic wise.

monologues, the lack of action, are somewhat Wagneresque. We know that classic drama strictly observes the three unities — of time, place, and action; the English drama gives small heed to the unities. The action of a Greek drama must all be comprised within a single day; one of Shakespeare's plays lasts over twenty years. The Hebrew drama is like the Shakespearean in disregarding the unity of time, but it goes farther and disregards the sequence of time. It is in the very genius of western literature to make events follow in order of time, though even western literature makes one exception — in the novel, where the past is often called up by retrospect. Hebrew literature cares little for the sequence of time;[9] the event that came first is not necessarily related first. We find in the prophets, and also in the histories, repeated illustrations of this disregard of time sequence, and the same disregard of time sequence rules the Hebrew drama, modern no less than ancient. I think it is from not keeping this fact in mind that those who try to show that the Song of Songs is a drama find so much difficulty in fitting the words to the theory.

[9] The Hebrew verb has not at all the time implications which we find in the verb-forms of modern (western) languages. Properly speaking, it has no tenses; its present and imperfect signify respectively complete and incomplete, conditional or in process, whether in present, past, or future time. One of the difficulties of Hebrew literature is that it is inevitably conditioned by this absence of time-sense.

Turning to the Song of Songs in the Revised Version, the first thing to be noticed is its strophical arrangement: the verses are grouped into longer and shorter strophes, in which the chapter divisions of 2, 3, and 8 are disregarded. Looking closely, we find that there are three refrains, each occurring three times, though not in the same relative positions. One of these refrains is:

Until the day be cool and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a gazelle or a young hart
Upon the mountains of spices.[10]

Another refrain is:

I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up,
Nor awaken love
Until it please.[11]

There is no pronoun — "my" love — in the Hebrew. It is the passion of love, not a person, that is in question.

The third refrain is:

I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine,
He feedeth his flock among the lilies.[12]

It would not be correct to say that these refrains always mark changes of scene; they seem

[10] This refrain is found, with certain differences, at the end of chap. 2, at 4: 6, and at the close of the book.

[11] Found at 2: 7; 3: 5, and 8: 4.

[12] Found, with some variations, at 2: 16; 6: 3, and 7: 10.

rather to mark the recurrence of certain states of feeling.

The characters in this drama are Shelomith, King Solomon, the ladies of his harem, called "daughters of Jerusalem," and the shepherd lover of Shelomith, with certain citizens and shepherds. The story appears to be as follows:

Shelomith, a beautiful peasant girl living in the northern part of the kingdom, is the daughter of a mother who has several sons by a former marriage. These sons are not friendly to their sister, perhaps because they are not pleased with a shepherd wooer of hers, and they send her to keep a vineyard at some distance from her home. But the shepherd lover follows her, and it seems probable that they are secretly married. At any rate, she is blissfully happy in her love, and one day, when in the ecstasy of her rapture she is dancing, all by herself in her vineyard, a rather voluptuous dance called "of Mahanaim," she is seen by King Solomon, who is making a progress through his kingdom attended by a numerous retinue. The beauty of the girl awakens desire for her possession, and the king has her stolen and spirited away to Jerusalem in one of his chariots. There she is placed in charge of "the daughters of Jerusalem," whose duty it is to prepare her mind for the honor that awaits her. Desiring, for his own greater pleasure, to win her

love before taking her for a wife, King Solomon sets himself on his return to lay siege to her heart, it being the duty and the policy of the ladies of the harem to aid him in what both he and they suppose will be a very easy conquest. It is high promotion for a peasant girl, the sun-browned keeper of a vineyard, to become one of the wives of the king! How the attempt prospers will come out as we read.

The first scene [13] shows the bewildered country girl in the king's harem, surrounded by the ladies of the palace. Terrified at her capture, and sore of heart with separation from her lover, she comforts herself with imagining that she is with him as in the happier days:

> Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth.

The ladies interrupt her with praises of Solomon, not understanding, or not wishing to understand, that it is of her shepherd lover that she is speaking:

Better than wine are thy caresses,
Lovely the fragrance of thy vestments,
Thou whose name is Sweet Ointment [that is, Solomon]!
Therefore the maidens love thee!

But she calls upon her lover to rescue her:

> Draw me after thee,
> O let us run!
> For the king has brought me into his chamber.

[13] Cant. 1: 2–8.

Then the women:

He will frolic and rejoice in thee,
Will find thy caresses more grateful than wine.
[*Aside, satirically*] Rightly indeed do they love thee!

The persistence of the women in thus assuming that everything she says refers to the king confuses the girl and interrupts her thoughts; she sees contempt in their eyes, mocking surprise that the king should care for this rustic beauty. The spirit of Shelomith, who in fact is not lacking in spirit, comes to her aid. She justifies herself for her sunburned skin; it is because her brothers made her keep the vineyard. She may be scorched with the sun, black as the goats'-hair tents of the Beduins, but she knows herself for all that to be beautiful as the gorgeous hangings in Solomon's chamber. But the mention of the vineyard reminds her of her capture — her own vineyard she is now not able to keep; and then her grief breaks forth in a passionate appeal to her absent lover:

Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,
Where feedest thou thy flocks — where
Makest them to rest at noon?
That I may not be like one quite forgotten
Among the flocks of the comrades!

The ladies answer her with sneers: "Are you so witless, fairest woman, as to prefer your peasant lover to Solomon?" And they mockingly

bid her go search for her lover among the shepherds' tents.

The second scene opens [14] with the entrance of Solomon, who sets himself to win her heart with studied compliments, which have all the "local color" so much prized by modern novelists. We may recall to mind that Solomon, by his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter, had lately become the proud possessor of horses:

To my steed in Pharaoh's chariot
Do I liken thee, my friend [he does not say "my love," as in our English Bible].
Lovely are thy cheeks with ringlets,

the only ornaments of the peasant girl. But he knows the value of jewels and fine clothes in a siege like this, and he tells her that she shall have finer ornaments than her curls — strings of jewels and studs of gold, and so on. The girl answers him briefly, but, remembering that he is the king, with best compliment she knows how to make:

While the king sat at his table
My spikenard gave out its fragrance [her tribute of homage].

We may observe here that Solomon has the oriental fondness for perfume: his name is Sweet Ointment.

But Shelomith is perfectly well aware that he

[14] Cant. 1:9 — 2:7.

purposes to lay siege to her heart, and she flies to her only defense — the thought of her absent lover, who is a bunch of myrrh to her — talking to him in a stage aside, and matching each of Solomon's pretty speeches with an impassioned application of it to the one whom her soul loves.

Thus when Solomon says to her (vs. 15):

> Indeed thou art lovely, my friend,
> Yes, lovely are thy dovelike eyes;

she repeats in her passionate aside to her absent shepherd (vss. 16, 17):

> Indeed *thou* art lovely, and delightful, my beloved.
> Our house has beams of cedar,
> Our rafters are of cypress.

In this rustic home of theirs she had been like a crocus of the plain of Sharon or the brilliant anemone of the upland valleys (2: 1).

Solomon goes on with his blandishments:

> As a lily among thorns
> Is my friend among the maidens.

It only suggests to her another thought of her absent lover:

> As an apple among the trees of the wood
> So is my beloved among the sons.

And she thinks longingly of the delight of being under his shadow, with his love like a banner above her. Her longing grows more intense:

Strengthen me with raisin cakes,
Comfort me with apples —
For I am sick with love.
His left arm under my head
And his right arm embracing me!

The thought of the king's purpose becomes intolerable, and she bursts forth with:

I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles, by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not,
Awaken not,
Love until it please!

And so the scene closes; for though the poor, tortured girl's appeal had been only to the ladies of the harem, the king perceived from it that it was useless for him to try any longer at this time to awaken love.

The third scene [15] opens with Shelomith in her chamber, gazing from her lattice — that lattice window which means so much in the life of the eastern harem — gazing northward, wholly absorbed in thought of her lover:

Hark to my beloved! see him coming
Leaping over mountains, springing over hills!

She imagines that he has followed her even to the king's palace, that he will rescue her; she fancies him calling:

[15] 2: 8–17.

Arise my friend,
My beauty, and come!
For see, the winter has passed,
The rain is over and gone,
The flowers appear in the land,
The time of singing is come
And the turtledove's murmur is heard in our land.

She sees the reddening figs, smells the odor of the blossoming vines, and hears him call again:

Arise, my friend,
My beauty, and come away!

All the longing of her soul bursts forth in her answering song:

O my dove that art in the clefts of the rocks,
In the covert of the steep place,
Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice!
For sweet is thy voice and thy countenance lovely.

Is it possible that that is indeed his voice that comes to her floating up from outside the palace? Has he indeed followed her from his far-away home on the slopes of Lebanon, though he can by no means gain entrance to the palace? Ah, yes! From the high lattice window the Shulamite sees her lover

Standing behind our wall,
Looking in at the windows,
Showing himself through the lattice.

It was not wholly imagination that she had heard him singing:

Arise, my love,
My beauty, and come away!

Like Blondin beneath the captive Lionheart's prison, making his presence known with his little song, so the shepherd lover gives his signal with the refrain of a little song they had been used to sing together while trimming their grapes:

Take us the foxes,
The little foxes that spoil the vineyards,
For our vineyards are in blossom.

In her deep joy she sings back the refrain:

My beloved is mine and I am his,
He feedeth among the lilies.

And her last appeal that somehow he shall find a way to rescue her:

Until the day grows cool, and the shadows flee—
Come to me, and soon, my beloved!
Like the gazelle or the young hind
Over the hills that part us!

IV

Some time has elapsed before the second act.[16] It seems to be early morning, and Shelomith is telling the ladies of the harem of a painful dream that she has had: How by night on her bed (that is, in her dreams) she sought him whom her soul loved and found him not; and how in her dream she arose and sought him through the city, but

[16] Cant. 3: 1–4.

found him not. Of the watchman who found her she asked where he was; then suddenly, with one of the abrupt changes of a dream, she saw him, held him, and would not let him go, and brought him home to her mother's house. Ah, with that dream in her mind shall the ladies dare to go on with their senseless attempts to make her love the king?

I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,
By the gazelles, or by the hinds of the fields,
That ye stir not,
Awaken not,
Love until it will!

The second scene [17] opens in a new place. It is one of the gates of Jerusalem, whither Shelomith has been led that she may be impressed by the sight of Solomon in his palanquin coming in state from some country progress surrounded by his bodyguard. Those who are familiar with eastern story know how the first promise of an approaching army or caravan is always great clouds of dust rising like smoke. So now a voice of one of the citizens cries out in admiration:

Who is this coming out of the desert, like pillars of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense? etc.

[17] 3: 6–11.

Another answers:

> Lo! it is Solomon's litter!
> Fifty heroes around him —
> Heroes of Israel;
> Their swords are girt to their hips
> To prevent the nightly surprise.

And a third exclaims:

> A gorgeous palanquin made Solomon
> Of wood from Lebánon.

And describes its beauties, ending:

> Come forth and behold, you daughters of Zion,
> Behold King Solomon,
> And the crown wherewith his mother crowned him
> On the day of his espousals —
> The day of his gladness of heart!

In the third scene[18] they have returned to the palace, and Solomon enters to see what effect his grand display has produced. He begins his compliments:

> Indeed, thou art fair, O my friend;
> Yes, fair thy doves' eyes, behind thy locks;

cataloguing all her beauties in comparison with everything lovely and imposing: her lips like a thread of scarlet, her neck like the tower of David, and so on. Evidently the ladies had reported her little song of the day before, for with what seems like a refinement of sarcasm he par-

[18] 4: 1–7.

odies her refrains, comparing her breasts to two young gazelles that feed among lilies; and then, as she makes him no reply, he goes on with his parody of her request of her lover:

Until the day grows cool and the shadows flee
I will get me to *my* mountains — of myrrh,
And to *my* hills — of frankincense.

In other words, he will retire and perfume himself, leaving her with one parting compliment to meditate upon:

Thou art all fair, my friend,
Thou art altogether spotless!

In the fourth scene[19] Shelomith, being left alone with the ladies, falls back upon her memories — how in the happy days gone by her lover had sung to her:

Come with me to Lebánon,
My bride, with me to Lebánon;
Look from the top of Amána,
From the top of Shenir and of Hermon.
Come from the dens of the lions
With me from the hills of the leopards [the wild mountains that they know so well].

So the remembered song goes on:

Thou wakest my heart, sister-bride,
My heart with one of thine eyes,
With one chain of thy neck!
Sweet thy caress, sister-bride —

[19] 4: 8 — 5: 1.

Sweeter thy kisses than wine,
  Thy perfumes sweeter than spice;
Thy lips drop honey, my bride —
  Honey and milk from thy tongue —
And thy clothes like Lebánon's perfume.

The purity of the love she has known is in startling contrast to the love of the harem, but she is probably too innocent to recognize this; she only remembers that to her own true lover she was a sister-bride, and that she was all for him, a garden walled round from all but him, the fountain of her love sealed to all but her own beloved:

O! walled-about garden, sister-bride,
Walled-about well, fountain sealed,
  Shoots of a pomegranate garden
Filled with precious fruits!
  Henna with spikenard,
  Spikenard with saffron,
  Calamus and cinnamon;
  Trees of frankincense,
  Myrrh and aloes,
  With costliest spice;
Thou fount of the garden!
Thou living water-spring,
Rippling streams from Lebánon!

To him she had given herself with delicate unreserve, calling to the winds to breathe upon this garden that all its spices might flow out for him. But the king has entered and heard her loving soliloquy, and taking up her words he answers:

I come to my garden, sister-bride,
I gather my myrrh with my spice,
I eat my honeycomb with my honey;
I drink my wine with my milk.

While the chorus of women breaks in with:

Eat, O friends,
Drink — yes, drink abundantly of love!

We may imagine the girl turning away from her royal lover; for when the fifth scene [20] opens it is still of her shepherd that she is thinking.

Another night has passed between these scenes, and she is again telling her dream to the court ladies — either she dreamed that she was married to her beloved, or, as seems more probable, in her dream she lived over again their wedding-day, but with all the cruel cross-purposes of a dream. She had delayed for a moment to open to him, and he had gone away — then when she sought him through the city in the night, the watchman had been unkind to her, mistaking her character. As she tells the dream, her longing for her shepherd grows intense, and the scene closes with the refrain, altered to correspond with this advance in her feeling:

I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,
If you find my beloved — what will you tell him? —
That I am sick with love!

[20] 5: 2–8.

In the sixth scene[21] the same persons are present; the ladies ask her:

> What is your beloved as a friend,
> O fairest woman —
> What is your beloved as a friend,
> That you so adjure us?

And she answers, singing his praises in happiest tones:

> My beloved is white and red; the chiefest among ten thousand,

describing all his personal charms in detail — his curly black locks, his lips like scarlet lilies, his eyes like doves, and so on — proudly ending:

> This is my beloved and this my friend,
> Ye daughters of Jerusalem!

They mockingly ask her where this paragon has gone, and she answers first with the figure with which she before comforted herself (that she is his garden), that he is gone to his garden to gather lilies (that is, that he is thinking of her), repeating the same idea in the refrain which closes the scene:

> I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;
> He feedeth his flock among the lilies.

Now the king comes in,[22] but he is no longer at ease, secure of conquering in the end, ready

[21] 5: 9 — 6: 3. [22] Seventh scene, 6: 4 — 8: 4.

with his flatteries. The constancy of this little peasant girl to her absent lover, her utter disregard of the compliments and the gorgeous gifts he has showered upon her, the steadfast loyalty with which she has kept her mind upon her beloved, as a defense against the king's blandishments — all this has made a tremendous impression upon Solomon, used to seeing women easily yield to him. He is half afraid of this simple mountain girl — she is not so much like a gentle doe feeding among the lilies as he had supposed; she is rather like a fortified city:

> O my friend, beauteous as Tirzah,
> Lovely as Jerusalem,
> Terrible as an army with banners —
> (Turn away thine eyes — they terrify me!)

She must look away if he is to go on with his compliments about her hair and her teeth and her temples. The thought of her steadfast devotion and purity sickens him for the moment of his three-score queens and four-score concubines:

> *My* dove, my queen is *one*,
> The only one of her mother.

Even the queens and concubines must admire her beauty and virtue:

> The daughters saw her and called her blessed,
> Yes, the queens and concubines praised her!

She has ceased to listen; against the subtle danger that lurks in this apparent conversion of the king to purity and single-hearted devotion she will steel herself by thinking all the more persistently of her absent loved one, persuading herself that it is he, not the king, who thought her terrible as an army with banners. She lives over again that dreadful hour when she was lost to him:

> I went down into my nut garden,
> To see how the trees sprouted;
> To see if the vine was budding
> Or the pomegranates in bloom.
> I knew not that my will had brought me
> To the chariot of the noble —

(Solomon's emissaries). She had retreated at sight of them, and they had recalled her:

> Come back, O Shelomith —
> Come back that we gaze upon thee!

All unconscious of danger, she had turned back to ask:

> What will ye of Shelomith?

And they had answered:

> The dance of the Mahanaim.

This was the fatal dance in which she had been expressing her girlish joy in her love, her lover, the beautiful spring weather, and the fact of living, when Solomon had seen her through the

hedgerows and had sent his emissaries to seize her. Now the name of the dance carries the king back to that time, and he goes over it with unction, recalling to mind all the concealed beauties of the artless girl, as they had been revealed in the dance when she thought herself unseen. This seems to me the best explanation of the voluptuous description of the first nine verses of the seventh chapter. It is unthinkable that Shelomith was here over-persuaded into giving an exhibition of herself in a dance which would be indecent in the presence of the king, though entirely allowable in the supposed solitude of her own garden.

His description of her beauties only makes her the more insist that she is true to her absent one:

> *I am my beloved's,* and my beloved is mine.

She fancies her shepherd calling her:

> Come, my beloved, let us forth to the field,
> Let us lodge in the villages,
> Let us early to the vineyards,
> Let us see if the vines flourish,
> If the vine blossoms have opened,
> The pomegranates budded.
> There will I give thee my loves;
> The marsh lilies are fragrant,
> And about our gates are all rare fruits —
> I have stored them for thee, my beloved.[28]

[28] Professor George Adam Smith's translation in *The Historical Geography of the Holy Land.*

Her heart goes out to him with a loud cry of longing:

O wert thou my brother, nursed at my mother's breast,
That I might find thee without and kiss thee, and no one despise me!
That I might lead thee to my mother's house;
Bring thee where thou mightest teach me;
Give thee to drink of spiced wine, of pomegranate juice!

She turns passionately with her last appeal:

I adjure you, daughters of Jerusalem,
Oh, stir not,
Oh, waken not,
Love, until it will!

V

Love and constancy have triumphed: the peasant girl has not only convinced the king of her perfect loyalty and purity, she has won him to her side. He has abandoned his attempt to win her and returned her to her home. The third act[24] opens with the happy lovers restored to one another, drawing near to a group of shepherds in their northern country. The shepherds cry amazed:

Who is this coming from the wilderness,
Leaning on her beloved?

Shelomith, all excitement, is telling her beloved how she was brought back to him as he was taking his noon-tide rest:

[24] 8: 5–14.

Under the apple tree I awaked thee,
Where thy mother bare thee —
Where she bare thee with sorrow.

The passion of love, born of those days of anguish in Jerusalem, bursts forth:

Lay me like the seal ring on thine heart;
Like the seal ring on thine arm!
For strong as death is love;
Cruel as the grave is jealousy.
Its flashes [jealousy] are fire flashes;
Its glow [love] the glow of God![25]

Then, as she realizes that she is safe with him, she sighs blissfully:

Many waters cannot quench love,
And streams can never drown it.
If one [for instance, Solomon] offered all his household goods for love,
One would simply scorn him!

Now Shelomith's brothers come upon the scene[26] and try to justify the negligence through which their little sister was snatched away. They had made the common mistake of older brothers in not perceiving that she was grown up; they had no idea that anyone would want her. In future they will guard her better; they will build a wall about her and inclose her with boards of cedar. Shelomith answers: She is a wall to herself; has she not guarded her purity by the mighty power of true love? Under the figure of a vine-

[25] An interesting instance of the introverted parallel.
[26] Scene 2, vss. 8–14.

yard she contrasts the riches of Solomon with her poverty; she has her own vineyard now — is once more in possession of herself — wants nothing of the king.

The lover, thus far speechless with unhoped-for joy, now breaks in: No matter about Solomon, let her speak a word of love for himself:

> O thou who dwellest in the garden,
> The companions await thy voice.
> Let me hear it!

And she answers with the refrain of her captive days — its thought of separation left out:

> Turn again, my beloved, and be
> Like the gazelle or the young hinds
> Upon the balsam hills.

It seems to me unnecessary to justify this view of this exquisite drama: it justifies itself. Whatever may be its mystic signification — and that would be rather heightened than lessened by our view — the obvious sense is one we can ill afford to lose, especially in these days, when marriage is coming to be more and more a matter of calculation, a question of ways and means. So far back as this in the world's life the chosen people could cherish an ideal of love so pure, so strong, so far beyond all possibility of being bought by wealth or honor, as the love of this little vineyard dresser of the North for her shepherd of Lebanon.

CHAPTER VII

A PARABLE OF DIVINE LOVE

I

All the love-stories of Israel are in some degree parables of divine love. One after another, as they pass before us, they leave with us some elementary lesson of the great truth that the highest of all relations is the love-relation, and that this, therefore, must be the relation between God and man.

Elementary lessons only: the human mind needed long training to be made capable of receiving a truth so marvelous as that God himself is love. No other people of the world had it; none of the gods of the nation were, in any ethical sense, loving. Just as from the first the chief difference between Israel and other peoples was that Israel put an ever-deepening moral content into the notion of the holiness of God, so at last he came to differ from other peoples still more widely by his recognition of love as the essential characteristic of God. But this recognition did not come very early in his history; and when we discover the way in which at last it did

come, and look back over the past up to that time, we perceive that all through their early history the people Israel were being prepared by human love for the revelation of the love divine.

We have seen how early the Hebrew people took high rank in their notion of the relations of woman and man, and that, as a consequence, the Hebrew women were from the first remarkably independent, free, capable of initiative, and correspondingly responsible. As the wealth and luxury of the nation increased, we hear a great deal about this responsibility. Prophets like Amos and Isaiah address some of their most scathing utterances to women, because of the large part they had had in the deterioration of society; but the indictment against them was not so much sexual immorality as thoughtlessness and frivolity. "Because the daughters of Zion are haughty" and extravagantly fond of dress, the men of Jerusalem "shall fall by the sword," and her "mighty in the war."[1] It is "the women that are at ease," the "careless daughters," who are warned that they are bringing trouble upon the nation.[2] No better witness to the dignified position of women in Israel need be sought than

[1] Isa. 3: 16, 25.

[2] Isa. 32: 9. The "kine of Bashan," against whom Amos vehemently inveighs (4: 1–3), are cruelly regardless of the rights of the poor in their gross self-indulgence; but their immorality appears not to be sexual.

prophecies such as these. Like the women of America, their sins were those of freedom, not of slavery.

But whatever advance Israel may have made upon the nations in apprehension of the relation between woman and man, this is not to say that the invariable, or even the general, notion of marriage was that of a love-relation. In general it was rather that of protection of the weaker by the stronger, with fidelity as the due return for this protection. It would be evident to the most rudimentary ethical sense that the woman who was absolutely dependent on the man for protection owed to him obedience and chastity. But in Israel there was all along a high idea and intense realization of the tenderness of the bond between man and wife. The position of woman in Israel was one of dignity, because she was not only protected by her lord, but also beloved by him, and because he not only valued her fidelity, but coveted an answering love from her. We have seen this all through the love-stories of Israel.

From a very early time the covenant of God with Israel was presented under the type of marriage — its breach by the people Israel as infidelity to the marriage vow.[8] "Jehovah, whose

[8] This idea was not peculiar to Israel. Nearly all Semitic peoples had it; but their conception of the relation was physical and became horribly degrading. Hosea raised this conception out

name [that is, whose character] is Jealous, is a jealous God," says God to Moses; "take heed, therefore, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and go a-whoring after their gods;" [4] and in the last oracle given to Moses before his death, Jehovah said: "Behold this people will rise up and go a-whoring after the strange gods of the land whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me and break my covenant which I have made with them." [5] The idea of the marriage-relation between God and Israel was always present to the mind of Israel; but this is not to say that they recognized it as a love-relation. It was that earlier and more universal idea of fidelity which such expressions as these suggested; Jehovah was a great king above all other gods; he powerfully protected Israel from all enemies as a husband protects his wife; therefore Israel owed him the fidelity due from wife to husband. To acknowledge that the gods of other nations had any claim to Israel's service was precisely such a sin as the breach of the marriage vow.

The earliest in order of the written prophets was probably Amos, and in Amos the first ad-

of the natural to the moral sphere, and by that fact elevated and purified not only the idea of the relation of man to God, but the idea of marriage itself, showing its essential basis to be not physical, but moral.

[4] Ex. 34: 14, 15. [5] Deut. 31: 16.

vance toward the idea of love is made in the teaching that Jehovah is a God of mercy; but Amos does not teach his love. Up to that time Jehovah had been known as a God of justice, a righteous God; having a right, therefore, to demand fidelity and to punish infidelity. Amos saw that God could be and was merciful, and this prepared the way for the higher truth which is the highest we are as yet able to conceive — the truth of the love of God.

II

As all through their history the people of Israel had been gradually prepared to receive this truth by their own beautiful experience of human love, so at last the revelation came in the same way. Hosea followed Amos, and Hosea it was who taught that this was the relation of the nation to its God — that he loved Israel, and desired a reciprocal love. Not sacrifice, but kindness,[6] Hosea says, is what God would have — the kindness of a woman in the day of her espousals;[7] the first timid, but most beautiful, response of the heart of wife to husband. From this time the thought of Israel as the bride of

[6] Hos. 6: 6. Recent translators have made many attempts to give adequate translation to the Hebrew word here used. Professor G. A. Smith has perhaps been most successful in translating it (*The Book of the Twelve Prophets*) "leal love." But though it does include the idea of loyalty, there is more in it than that; there is also implied a gracious self-giving.

[7] Jer. 2: 2.

Jehovah became a standing metaphor; the marvelous truth that God loved Israel with an everlasting love was never absent from the prophetic teaching. For more than two thousand years this truth has been the inspiration of all that is noblest in the human race.

But it was not through the blissful experience of a happy love that Hosea learned this truth of truths. In the throes of a grief more tragic than common men can experience was the knowledge of God's love born into the world. The love-experience of Hosea was a parable of divine love, because like it his love was ill requited, outraged, wounded well-nigh unto death, and yet triumphant even unto salvation. The prophecy of Hosea is the story of a passion second only to that by which the world's redemption was won: the book throbs with the agony of an indescribable woe; its rhythm, as Cheyne says, is the rhythm of sobs and sighs. It quivers like the pulse of a fever patient, or like the air over a furnace of intolerable heat. "Even the brief parallelism of Hebrew poetry seems too long for the quick spasms of the writer's heart," says one of the later writers on this book, George Adam Smith.

III

It was not until after the tragedy of his life was over that Hosea recognized that it had been

a God-inspired life. Looking back over the long years of anguish and humiliation, conscious in his own heart of a love which could endure through the last outrage, and by sheer force of its own inviolability win back its object to fidelity and love, he saw that if this was possible between human husband and wife, much more must it be true of Jehovah in his relations to unfaithful Israel. Thus at last he came to see the meaning of his martyrdom — that God had made him the mediator of a revelation which could by no other means have been given to mankind. And so, though he had no thought of this in the days of his early manhood, when first he saw the fatal beauty of Gomer, daughter of Diblaim, and loving her made her his wife, not dreaming that she would ever prove unfaithful, yet when all the bitter experience was over, knowing that there can be no evil in a city and Jehovah hath not done it, it seemed to him as if, all unknown to himself, God had impelled him to "Go, take a wife who is a harlot and will bear children of harlotry; for the land is greatly playing the harlot in departing from Jehovah." [8]

[8] Hos. 1: 2. The view of the book here adopted, first set forth in English by Robertson Smith, has found many adherents, although its difficulties are so great as to have deterred many of the best scholars from adopting it. These difficulties, however, are rapidly yielding to sympathetic investigation. I cannot but think that to distinguish the influence of that absence of time-sense to which I have referred is to find some help in their solution.— Let me take this opportunity to refer my readers to "The

Hosea loved and trusted the beautiful false girl. How soon did the terrible distrust of her fidelity begin to creep over him? When they laid his first-born son in his arms, did the sickening doubt whether it was really his own assail his soul? "Jezreel" he named him —"God's sowing;" and afterward the name seemed to him an omen; for sowing is scattering, and he perceived that God had said: "I will visit the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, I will break the bow of Israel in the vale of Jezreel;" and he had yet to learn that what God scattereth may be God's seed, the seed of a new people with a new heart.[9] It was the brilliant reign of Jehu's great-grandson, the second Jeroboam,[10] but the dynasty of Jehu was already hurrying to its fall. Baal-worship and luxury and sins of many kinds had utterly corrupted the state; the function of the prophet had changed from what it had been in the days of Samuel, from what it was in the person of Elisha. In those days of ignorance the prophet had been the defense of the nation; now he was the nation's critic, setting its faults and sins openly before it. Israel had been unfaithful to God, and it was Hosea's part to tell her that her punishment must surely come.

Story of Hosea's Marriage," by Professor Julius A. Bewer, printed in the *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*, January, 1906, which came to my knowledge too late for me to make the use of it which I should have liked to do.

[9] Hos. 1: 3–5. [10] 2 Kings 14: 23–29.

If the young husband's heart was tremulous with vague doubts when his first-born was brought to him, it was torn with a cruel certainty when a few years later a baby girl was laid in his arms.[11] In the anguish of his soul he named her "Lo-ruhamah"—"She that never knew a father's love;"[12] what room was there in his tortured heart for love of a base-born child? The dark shadow of his woe was projected upon his country — faithless to its God as his fair false wife to him. "I will no more show a father's love to the house of Israel," he seemed to hear God say, "for I will entirely take them away." And yet, though the child was Lo-ruhamah, the "not compassioned," the memory of those happy days when he took his young wife home forbade him to send the mother away. A great yearning to save her from herself took possession of him, and he could no more cast her off than God could cast off his people.

And so another son was born.[13] Alas! "Lo-ammi"—"Not-*my*-people"— was the only name he could give this child, to whom for its guilty mother's sake he still gave the protection of his

[11] Hos. 1: 6–7.

[12] The word is literally "not compassioned," but, as Professor George Adam Smith has strikingly shown, the word in its context includes the relation of fatherhood—"not compassioned by a father." The quotations in this chapter are mainly from Professor Smith's *The Twelve Prophets*.

[13] Hos. 1: 8, 9.

home. It seemed to him as if God had named the child, thus saying to guilty Israel: "For ye are *not* my people and I — I am not yours." There was a long, dolorous way before Hosea ere he could know the boundless forgiveness of God.

When in after-years he wrote this cruel story as a lesson to unfaithful Israel, Hosea had come to see farther into this mystery and to know the unfailing hope that may be based upon God's love. And so, although he faithfully wrote down the bitter meaning of the names he had given the children, he hastened to add:[14] "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea which cannot be measured nor counted, and it shall be, in the place where it was said to them, 'No people of mine are ye!' it shall be said to them, 'Sons of the living God!' And the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together and they shall appoint themselves one head, and shall go up from the land, for great is the day of God's sowing (Jezreel); therefore say unto your brethren 'Ammi' (my-people) and to your sisters 'Ruhamah' (she is compassioned)."

But this was long afterward; now Hosea's tragedy deepens.[15] Unfaithful wife, unloving

[14] Hos. 1: 10 — 2: 1.

[15] The second chapter of this prophecy is not a continuation of Hosea's story; it is the application of his story to the case of Israel; yet it seems impossible not to read, beneath the impas-

mother, Gomer abandons the husband whose noble loyalty has tried so long to save her from herself, forsakes the children whom her husband has protected, and enters upon a life of open shame. How her husband still watched over her, thwarted her attempts to allure other lovers to her, secretly provided her with needful things, so that she should not be impelled by want to sin; how he even brought her children to her in the vain hope that their baby pleadings would awaken a sense of duty and a shame of sin — all this we may read between the lines of that impassioned second chapter in which, long years after, but his heart still quivering with the pain and shame of his own experiences, Hosea uttered the call of God to individual Israelites to strive to rescue their mother, the nation, from her apostasy:

Plead with your mother, plead.

sioned words which Hosea addressed to apostate Israel, the bitter experiences that lay between the story of chap. 1 and that of chap. 3. How, indeed, can it be otherwise? Something of what is indicated in chap. 2 must have happened; else why the need of buying back his wife? And is it thinkable that between these two periods (his experience having the prophetic significance that we knew it had) Hosea made no effort to save his erring wife from herself? The marvelous reticence with which he keeps in the background all that was not essential to his prophetic purpose only makes the more evident the facts that must underlie this chapter. The prophecy is the direct outcome of long reflection upon the facts of an indescribably painful experience. The three chapters are a unit, and the place of chap. 2, between chaps. 1 and 3, is particularly appropriate, not simply because the story that may be read between the lines belongs here in the sequence of events, but because this chapter, which interprets both itself and the other two, is the "central peak" between them, or, to change the figure, the very keystone of the arch.

And as even this fails to move her —

If she will not be my wife,
I will not be her husband.
Then let her remove her whoredoms from her face,
And her adulteries from between her breasts;
Lest I strip her naked,
And set her as the day when she was born,
And make her as a wilderness,
And set her like a dry land,
And slay her with thirst;
And upon her children have no compassion;
For they are the children of whoredom.[16]

If her children's pleadings move her not, nor the threat of punishment to her, will she not be moved by pity for the little ones, who will be uncompassioned if she have not compassion on them? Alas, no!

Verily their mother played the harlot:
She that conceived them acted shamefully when she said,
"I will go after my lovers,
The givers of my bread and my water,
My wool and my flax, mine oil and my drinks."

All hope of moving her by love or fear or pity is gone; there is nothing for it but discipline:

Therefore, behold, I am going to hedge up her way with thorns,
And build her a wall,
That she find not her paths.
When she would pursue after her lovers,
She shall not overtake them;
When she would seek them, she shall not find.

[16] 2: 2–4.

Then she will say, "Let me go
And return unto my first husband;
For it was better with me then than now."

It is all spoken of Israel and to Israel, a very utterance of Jehovah by his prophet; yet how should Hosea not remember that it was thus that perverse Gomer had believed that her lovers would give her all she needed, if only she could find them; how bewildered she had sought after them, not perceiving that it was her husband's love which thwarted her, in the hope that at last, in the desperation of baffled purpose, she would determine to return to him, if only because when she was with him it had been better with her than now. So blind was perverse Israel to all Jehovah's benefits.

Indeed she did not know
That it was I who gave her
The corn, and the new wine, and the new oil,
And silver heaped upon her,
And gold — and they worked it up into a Baal![17]

In those cruel days of his own experience Hosea had perceived that to take back his wife unrepentant would be no kindness to her. This outraged husband, who had so loyally watched over his erring wife in her open infidelity, still longed to save her from herself. She needed the

[17] 2: 8.

discipline of sorrow to soften her wanton heart. Such discipline does Israel need.

Therefore I will turn and take away
My corn in its time and my new wine in its season,
And I will pluck away my wool and my flax,
That should have covered her nakedness;
And now I will reveal her shame
In the eyes of her lovers,
And no man shall rescue her from my hand;
And I will make an end of all her joyance,
Her pilgrimages, her new moons and her Sabbaths, and all her festivals.[18]

As Hosea delivers his message, sympathy with God takes him out of himself. Jehovah and Israel occupy all his thought:

And I will lay waste her vines and her figs,
Of which she said,
"They are a gift, mine own,
Which my lovers gave me;"
And I will turn them to jungle
And the wild beasts shall devour them.
And I will visit upon her the days of the Baalim,
When she used to offer incense to them,
When she decked herself with her nose-rings and her jewels,
And went after her lovers;
And me she forgat! is the utterance of Jehovah.[19]

In spite of the walls with which Hosea had hedged her up, perhaps even because of them, Gomer had fallen into the last depth of vileness, had sold herself into slavery. It was from this

[18] 2: 9–11. [19] 2: 12, 13.

iron prison of degradation that her desperate appeal reached Hosea's ears. What husband could take back a wife who had fallen so low? How terrific the struggle must have been we need little knowledge of human nature to show us; how it ended he tells. There came a day when it was to him as if God spoke,[20] telling him: "Go again, love this woman beloved of a paramour and an adulteress, according to the love of Jehovah toward the children of Israel; though they are turning unto other gods and are lovers of raisin cakes" (offered to Baal). And so he bought her to him — oh, the bitterness of heart with which the husband went to her owner and bought back his own wife "for fifteen pieces of silver and an homer and a half of barley"! Virtue itself would have been outraged had he taken her back to him unrepentant, blind to the heinous nature of her past conduct. Hosea might indeed say to her as the knightly Arthur to guilty Guinevere:

> Lo, I forgive thee as the eternal God forgives;

but he must perforce add:

> Do thou for thine own soul the rest.

But Gomer is not such a one as Guinevere, to fight the bitter fight alone. She needs both discipline and help.[21] It was for both purposes that

[20] 3: 1, 2. [21] 3: 3.

her husband said to her: "Many days shalt thou abide for me; thou shalt not play the harlot, and thou shalt not be for any husband." And — as if his whole life had not been proof of his fidelity — he adds: "And I for my part also will be so toward thee." It is the memory of this anxious probation time that underlies his utterance for God to Israel:[22]

> Therefore I am going to woo her,
> And I will bring her into the wilderness,
> And speak home to her heart.

The day must have come, though we are not told of it, when Hosea's heart began to quiver with hope that a repentant love would be the blissful outcome of his long forgiveness and tireless patience. The memory of it had become a part of his life when he prophesied to Israel:[23]

> And from thence I will give her her vineyards,
> And the vale of Akhor (trouble) for a doorway of hope;
> And there she will respond to me as in the days of her youth,
> As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.
> And it shall be in that day, is the utterance of Jehovah,
> Thou shalt call me "my husband,"
> And thou shalt not call me any more "my master" (Baal),
> For I will take away the names of the Baalim from her mouth,
> And they shall no more be remembered by name.

[22] 2: 14. [23] 2: 15–17.

And during these anxious wilderness days, hardly daring to hope that the patience of his love would ever be rewarded by a repentant, and therefore worthy, love from Gomer, Hosea comes into that deeper sympathy with God which makes him perceive that of necessity — in very love — disaster must overtake the people who have wandered from God; that during many days the children of Israel must abide without a king and without a prince and without means of worship. Perhaps it is because he can believe that for Israel the discipline will be potent, can see by faith that "afterward the children of Israel will turn and seek Jehovah their God and David their king and come trembling unto Jehovah and unto his goodness in the latter days," that he dares all this time to hope that so "trembling," not with terror, but in the thrill of love born of penitence, and a new consciousness of her husband's love, will Gomer come to him one day.

What manner of joy can a husband find even in a repentant and thoroughly reformed wife, after an experience like this? Ah, one must, indeed, love almost as God loves to be able to rise above the shame and anguish of the cruel ordeal. Hosea's heart-strings quivered with remembered pain all the days of his life. Yet that his forgiveness was a reflection of God's forgiveness is as

certain as that his love had revealed to him the love of God.

The hope of his own heart is a revelation of God's heart:[24]

Verily, I will espouse thee to me forever;
Verily, I will espouse thee to me in righteousness,
And in justice and in kindness, and in tender mercies;
Verily, I will espouse thee to me in faithfulness,
And thou shalt know Jehovah.

In the unfathomable joy of an infinite forgiveness Hosea sees all nature responding when once Israel shall have responded to the infinite love of God:[25]

And it shall come to pass in that day I will respond —
I will respond to the heavens, is the utterance of Jehovah,
And they shall respond to the earth,
And the earth shall respond to the corn,
And the new wine and the new oil;
And these shall respond to Jezreel [who had been scattered like seed across many lands];
And I will have a father's compassion on the Not-compassioned,
And to Not-my-people I will say "My people thou art!"
And he shall say "My God!"

The bitter story of Hosea's life's tragedy was recorded only for Israel's sake, that apostate Israel might find in it an object-lesson of the love of God; and the rest of his book is occupied with God's love alone; only under it all we can feel

[24] 2: 19, 20. [25] 2: 21–23.

the throbbing of his human heart, giving back beat for beat in sympathy with every heart-throb of the love divine.

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim,
Let thee go, Israel?
Shall I make an Admah of thee?
Treat thee as Zeboim [the destroyed cities of the plain]?
Mine heart is turned upon me,
My compassions begin to boil;
I will not perform the fierceness of my anger,
I will not turn to destroy Ephraim,
For I am God, not man.

This is the undreamed secret of perfect love; this the discovery Hosea made in the blinding darkness of his shame.[26]

IV

The remainder of the prophecy is entirely devoted to interpreting to Israel its past, and especially its present, history in the light of this new revelation of the love of God. Hosea lived in a dreadful time, the brilliant reign of the second Jeroboam, under whom wealth and luxury increased at a startling rate. The rich were growing richer and the poor poorer; the women were careless and at ease, selfishly indifferent to the trend of affairs; priest and prophet alike corrupt; Baal-worship — the worship of the powers of nature — taking the place of the worship of

[26] 11: 8, 9.

Jehovah, though it was he and not Baal who gave Israel her corn and her wine.[27] It was in this brilliant, thoughtless time that Hosea sounded the alarm:[28]

Blow ye the trumpet in Gibeah,
The clarion in Ramah,
Raise the slogan at Beth-aven,
"After thee, Benjamin!"[29]
Ephraim shall become desolation in the day of punishment;
Among the tribes of Israel I have made known what is certain.

After a time came the fall of the dynasty; Jeroboam's son Zechariah assassinated after a six months' reign, and the usurper Shallum murdered within another month, factions and rival claimants disputing the throne.[30] For a dozen years or more Assyria was appealed to by one party, Egypt by another; Jehovah forgotten by both. It was in the early days of this tumultuous time that Hosea, remembering how it was only in the last extremity that Gomer had turned to him, exclaims for God:[31]

I will go back into my place,
Until they feel their guilt and seek me.
When trouble comes they will soon seek for me,

[27] 2: 8.
[28] 5: 8.
[29] Benjamin's left-handed slingers were always the vanguard.
[30] 2 Kings 15: 8, 10, 13–16.
[31] Hos. 5: 15 — 6: 1.

Saying, "Come, let us return unto Jehovah,
For he hath rent and he may heal us,
He hath wounded, so he may bind us up."

Then as things went on from bad to worse:[82]

O, Ephraim, *what* can I make of thee?
O, Judah, what can I make of *thee?*
Your love is like the morning cloud — like the dew it early vanisheth!
Therefore I hew them by the prophets — by the words of my mouth I slay them,
And my judgment goes forth like the lightning;
For I desire kindness, not sacrifice.[83]

Time went on, and one king of Israel had become a vassal of Assyria, while Egypt was intriguing to set another on the throne.[84] Again and again Hosea tried to draw his countrymen to allegiance to Jehovah, by warnings, by entreaties, by threats:

Ephraim is blasted; their root is withered; they bear no fruit!
Yea, though they bring forth, I will slay their beloved children!
My God hath cast them off, for they hearkened not unto him!
Alas! they shall become wanderers far among the nations.[85]

It is the doom that comes upon any nation through immorality and national ill-faith. Hosea

[82] 6: 4–6.
[83] "The kindness of a woman in the day of her espousals."
[84] 2 Kings 15: 17–20; cf. Hos. 5: 13; 7: 11; 8: 9; 12: 1.
[85] Hos. 9: 16, 17.

did not live to the exile, but he could foresee the trend of events:[36]

He shall break the walls of their altars, he shall ruin their pillars,
For already they are saying: "No king have we,
For we have not feared Jehovah, and the king — what could he do for us?"

In this extremity of danger Hosea pleads with passionate earnestness for a true repentance — it is even yet not too late:[37]

Sow unto yourselves in righteousness — then shall ye reap according to God's kindness (leal love).
Break up your fallow ground; for it is time to seek Jehovah
Until he come and rain righteousness upon you.

He appeals to the past history of Israel — to the early days when Jehovah so wonderfully interposed in his destinies:[38]

When Israel was a child I loved him, and out of Egypt I called him to be my son.[39]
The more I called them the farther they went from me;
They kept sacrificing unto the Baalim, and burning incense unto graven images.
Yet I, even I, taught Ephraim to walk — taking him by the arms [as a father takes a little child];
But they knew not that it was I who healed them [when the little child fell and hurt himself].
With the cords of a man I drew them, with the bands of love [the leading-strings of a little child],

[36] Hos. 10: 2, 3.
[37] 10: 12.
[38] 11: 1–7.
[39] Pendulum movement.

I was to them as they that take off the yoke, and gently
I gave them meat.[40]
To Egypt he shall return — or the Assyrian shall be his
king,
For to return unto me they have refused.
The sword shall rage against his cities and consume his
bars,
It shall devour them because of their own counsels.
And my people — they are bent on turning away from me!
Though they were called up to God, not one would lift
himself!

Their stubbornness only makes more evident the divine compassion: [41]

How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? Let thee go, Israel?

At last — far off, perhaps, but at last they will repent. Then he will take them to himself again:

They shall follow Jehovah: He shall roar like a man
[call to them with a loud voice so that they can
hear in the land of captivity]!
When he roars, the children shall come trembling from
the West,
They shall come fluttering, as a bird, out of Egypt,
As a dove, out of Assyria. And I will bring them to their
own houses,
Is the utterance of Jehovah.[42]

The prophet reviews the long-past history of his people,[43] culminating in apostasy so flagrant as inevitably to induce, not only national destruc-

[40] Metaphor changed; the thought is still the rescue from Egypt, where they had been as dumb driven cattle.

[41] Hos. 11: 8.

[42] 11: 10, 11.

[43] 12: 2 — 13: 3.

tion, but moral death.[44] Yet the hope of Hosea triumphed over despair, for did not he know the love of God, a love stronger than death? Yes, stronger even than death: this last revelation of the nature of God's love had come to Hosea; the conviction that the love of God must triumph even over the grave. Though the walls of Jerusalem might crumble, and the fairest of Israel's warriors lie strewn upon the ruins, it could not be that they whom God loved were finally separated from him. So rose upon his mind the vision of a personal immortality — the first intimation of it in Israel's history: [45]

I will ransom them from the power of Sheol: from death
I will redeem them.
O Death, where are thy plagues? O Sheol, where's thy
destroying power?
Change of purpose is hid from mine eyes.[46]

[44] 13: 1, 3.

[45] 13: 14.

[46] Scholarship has but one voice on this subject, and it refuses to this passage any but a national significance. I have tried hard to accept this conclusion, but I cannot, for to me it appears psychologically imperative that Hosea's experience, proving to him not only the deathless nature of love, but its kinship with the divine passion for man, must have given him some glimpse of its persistence beyond the grave. Unquestionably it was generations before Israel in general reached a conception of personal immortality, based upon the deathless nature of love, or any other foundation. Nevertheless, the psychological law that there can be no repentance where there is no hope seems to me to require, with this prophecy of the utter destruction of the nation demanded by the depth and blackness of Israel's sin, precisely that glimmer of eternal hope that shines through this fourteenth verse, and nowhere else in early prophecy. Only this, it appears to me, makes possible, from a psychological standpoint, that ultimate repentance of Israel which is foreshadowed in the promises of chap. 14.

It was through this eternal hope that it became clear to Hosea that, though captivity was now not to be averted, even yet there was hope in repentance. This fair prophetic vision of the final repentance and restoration of Israel came, in his last days, to bless the heart of the man who had so deeply loved, so perfectly forgiven. Out of the furnace of his grief had come this supreme recompense — the consciousness that his experience had been, not a meaningless affliction, but a parable of the divine love — the revelation that the love of God was eternal, and could never be shaken by his children's sin. The prophecy closes with a beautiful dramatic lyric, in which Israel, Jehovah, and the prophet give full expression to this new revelation of the eternal love of God.[47]

[*Prophet*] Turn again, Israel, unto Jehovah thy God,
For thou hast fallen by thine own iniquity.
Take with you words and turn unto Jehovah;
Say unto him everything.
[*Israel*] Forgive iniquity and accept good things;
And we will render the fruit of our lips.
Assyria cannot save us,
Upon horses we will not ride [we will not appeal to Egypt],
And we will not say any more "our god"
To the work of our hands [will no longer be idolaters];
— Thou by whom the orphan receives compassion!
[*Jehovah*] I will heal their apostasy,
I will love them freely;
For my anger hath turned from him.

[47] Hos., chap. 14.

I will be as the dew to Israel;
He shall bloom as the wild flower,
And strike his roots like Lebanon,
His shoots shall grow,
And his majesty shall be as the olive,
And he shall have scent like Lebanon;
Those who abide in his shadow shall return,
They shall quicken the corn,
And bloom like the vine,
And their memory shall be as the wine of Lebanon.
[*Israel*] What have I to do any more with idols?
[*Jehovah*] I have responded, and I shall regard him.
[*Israel*] I am like a green cypress [not a fruit-bearing tree].
[*Jehovah*] Of *me* is thy fruit found.
[*Prophet*] Whoso is wise let him understand these things;
Understanding, let him know them:
That the ways of Jehovah are upright,
And the righteous walk therein,
But transgressors stumble therein.[48]

V

We see now how the idea of the marriage relation between God and Israel— common, indeed, in all Semitic religions, but raised into the ethical sphere by the prophets of Israel alone — kept the nation pure in heart, especially from this time forward, when they were about to come into close relations with the gross sensuality of Assyria, the subtle licentiousness of Egypt, the foul corruption of Rome. Sexual sin was not, and never has been, an outstanding sin of Israel — its significance is too terrible for that. The very vehe-

[48] Professor Briggs's translation.

mence of prophetic denunciation goes to show that the sin is something unusual — abnormal. And for this reason the biblical writers can use a plainness of speech impossible to any others. We all know that there are some startlingly frank passages in the prophets. Not Maupassant or Daudet, not the later novels of Meredith and Hardy, have anything like the realism of certain of their chapters; yet these we need not fear to give to our sons and daughters to read, while we rightly dread the influence of those upon the immature minds of the young, however good the purpose with which they may have been written. There is in all modern literature no more striking lesson in sexual morality than Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. If ever a novel taught the truth that the wages of sin is death, that novel teaches it — teaches it without one gloss or thinnest veil over the hideous naked truth; teaches it without one touch of pity or pathos that might allure a youth to try for himself and see if after all things are as bad as they are painted. And yet the French authorities did right in forbidding the circulation of the book; for with all Flaubert's honesty of purpose, his whole-hearted desire so to paint that sin to which his fellow-countrymen are most addicted that it should forevermore be loathsome in their eyes, he had made a bad book; one that is corrupting by its

very fidelity, by the exquisite art and grace with which he has known how to be true to the gruesome reality.

The prophets treat of the same subject, with a realism to which Flaubert's fidelity to truth seems a thin veneer; yet they are safe reading; they arouse not one false emotion, quicken no unhealthy susceptibility. What is the difference? What can it be but this (for simply to say it is inspired only begs the question), that Flaubert has seen no room for repentance? And to paint sin without showing that it may be repented of is immoral. And yet from the point of view of man there is no room for repentance of persistent sin like this; it destroys the very faculty of repentance. Gomer could never have appreciated the character of her husband's forgiving love. But Jehovah is God, not man. In relations with him repentance is forever possible, and so love, having been multiplied into infinity, has been raised to a higher power than it could else have reached. All through these chapters it is the relation of God to man that is revealed in the terms of the relation between man and woman; and so the very words have been stripped of all secondary significance, and the human relation itself translated into terms of the divine. And through this translation it came to pass that not only under the old dispensation, and to the pure-

hearted Hebrew, God could reveal his love in a parable of human experience, but that under the new dispensation, and to sensuous Greeks and sensual orientals, the inspired apostle — himself probably unmarried — writing to the people of Ephesus [49] could picture the love of Christ for his church in words which give the true meaning of marriage; words whose meaning has not yet been fathomed by Christian civilization, which sees in man, not the savior, but the destroyer of woman.

For thousands of years the love of God has been the blessed certainty of those who know him; but it is not a mere happening that the revelation of it came by way of the experiences of married life. The trouble with much of present-day literature, and the darkest aspect of present-day life, is that men and women forget this truth of the typical sacredness of wedded love. When this is generally realized, the world will be a better place. It is a better place already for those who know this sacred secret, discovered in the agony of a passion in which love triumphed over wrong and shame. The world became a holier and a more intelligible place, in the day when its darkest mystery thus found its key.

[49] Eph. 5: 22–28.

CHAPTER VIII

SECULAR FAITH

I

In this individualistic age of ours it requires some mental detachment to realize that until a comparatively late period in the world's life the individual was nothing; the family, the gens, the clan, was everything. Nature, careless of the single life, seems to be imitated in the patriarchal family of the East, the village community of India, the gentile groups of Rome, in which the unit of society was found. So in the early records of Israel the tribe is the unit. We read in the opening of the book of Judges how "Judah said to Simeon his brother, 'Come up with me into my lot that we may fight against the Canaanites, and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot!'"[1] "Machir, the son of Manasseh," we are told, "was the father of Gilead"[2]—the vast grazing district east of Jordan. More distinctly, perhaps, the family was the unit, and therefore Achan's punishment[3] and the hanging of Saul's

[1] Judg. 1: 3. [2] Josh. 17: 1. [3] Josh. 7: 24, 25.

descendants for his sin [4] gave no offense to the moral sense of the community, but rather satisfied it. The only immortality that the early Israelite dreamed of was the perpetuity of Israel; his highest personal aspiration for the future that his family might never die out.

This indifference to the individual the Hebrews shared with all peoples of that time; but it is very interesting to discover that with Israel the feeling was based upon the instinctive perception of the importance of his race — that race in which all nations of the earth were to be blessed; upon a religious idea, therefore. This becomes strikingly clear when we perceive that, after all, there was from a very early time among the Hebrews what there was not among other peoples — a strong sense of individuality. In the very heart of the community there was a class — "the Wise," as they are called, "the Sages" — whose influence was exceedingly strong, and always tended to the development of the idea of individuality. These sages were not for a long time the writers of books. Their teachings remained in the folklore stage long after the early prophets had begun to commit the annals of the nation to writing; but they finally emerged in book form [5] in a series of works called the "Wisdom Literature," of which the Apocrypha give

[4] 2 Sam. 21: 1–9. [5] Probably after the captivity.

numerous examples, but of which in the canonical Scriptures Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are the most important. All these are decidedly individualistic. Job is a philosophical work of the very highest spiritual significance, and must be studied by itself. Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which fall under our present title, are works of practical philosophy, the thoughts of earnest and observant men on the things of this life.

The book of Proverbs makes no attempt to combine these thoughts into a system; it remains a series of disconnected observations. Yet one thing is very striking: that at this relatively early period the Hebrew sages had been vaguely impressed by that correlation of forces which modern philosophers call "the conservation of energy," but which to the crude minds of that time was simply a suggestion of what we may call "natural law." Not that they would have so entitled it; the thought as thus formulated is foreign to the concrete Hebrew mind.[6] They made no attempt to analyze it, but they did personify it under the name "Wisdom," personification being the only way in which, as we have

[6] Professor Toy speaks of the conception of the world as a physical and moral cosmos or orderly arrangement, as found in general in Gen., chap. 1; Ps. 104, but far more distinctly in Prov., chap. 8. Jastrow (*Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 433) refers to the deluge story in Genesis, which "ends with the promulgation of the fixed laws of the universe."

already seen, the Hebrew mind could deal with abstract thought.

But though the writers of Proverbs dimly saw the universe as a whole, they did not so see life. To the unphilosophic mind, as to the child, life remains a mere series of events long after he has come to perceive the link between physical things. Philosophically speaking, Ecclesiastes is a long way in advance of Proverbs, because it reflects on life as a whole, not as a series of experiences. It attempts to read the riddle of existence; and it is a striking fact that this sum of forces, this law of events, which we find the earlier writers of the book of Proverbs calling "Wisdom," is precisely the "All" which the later writer of Ecclesiastes pronounces to be "Vanity."[7] And this is entirely natural. When men begin to reflect deeply on life, the natural first result is pessimism, as such poets as Tennyson and Brown-

[7] The view of natural law here expressed has been criticised on the ground that the very suggestion of natural law is foreign to the Hebrew mind. As a philosophic tenet, no doubt, but not as a poetic or, more properly, religious interpretation of things. I find my view at least suggested by such scholars as Wildbaer, who finds Kohéleth tormented with the question: Is law stronger than God? as Bradley, who speaks of the law of order and recurrence as leaving in Kohéleth's mind no room for the development of human character; as Davidson, who sees Kohéleth oppressed by the fixed and inexorable order of things, and who concludes that his "Vanity" means that God has hemmed man in, that things are inevitable. All this, to my mind, bears out my conviction that Kohéleth, like the writer of the Wisdom sonnet in Proverbs, had a sense of natural law, but, unlike that writer, found it oppressive and discouraging. Wright finds the uniformity of natural law the uppermost fact in his mind.

ing make very clear. Proverbs is practical; it asks: What is good — that is, right — for me? Ecclesiastes is theoretical; it asks: What is the chief good? Both these questions, however, the practical and the theoretical, are questions of practical philosophy. Both deal with the problem of daily life. In other words, both are questions of "secular faith."

This title fits the subject, however, only when it is remembered that the distinction usually made between the sacred and the secular was wholly unknown to the sons of Israel. The distinction which Israel made was not between the sacred and the secular, but between the national and the individual. To prophets and poets, who occupied themselves with heavenly things, the nation was the supreme concern, because — far more closely than they dreamed — in the nation Israel was bound up the hope of the world. To the Wise, who occupied themselves with earthly things, the individual was important, because earthly matters are matters of individual interest. But to neither prophet nor sage would the thought have occurred to divorce the earthly from the heavenly. Human relationships and duties were to them so closely based upon divine reality that their worldly philosophy, like their common life, was in the nature of things religious. God was with them in their sowing and reaping, their sorrow

and joy. Their rules of husbandry were his teaching, their harvest gladness was his feast, the thunderstorm was his voice. The story of Israel's wars was the Book of the Wars of Jehovah, and as it was his armies that went forth to battle, so it was his oracle that gave them their common law.

All this was because God, being the source of unity, was the foundation of all things. The teachings of the Wise, their maxims of worldly morality, stand on this basis of divine reality. These teachings are the thought of man dealing with the concerns of man, but they are always the thought of man who not only has his face turned toward God, but to whom God is the most important fact in life. The most despairing utterances of the Preacher and the shrewdest maxims of the book of Proverbs have alike this consciousness of divine reality; with them the secular stands upon the sacred, as its basis, and can have no other ground for being. Just as all human relationships grow out of the fact of the fatherhood of God, the higher unity in which all things meet, so all human morality, all human duties and problems, find also their unity in the relation all men bear to God.

Hebrew wisdom, then, had to do with practical matters of conduct between man and man, with the ordering of individual and social life; but it

did not particularly concern itself with matters between man and God. The book of Proverbs has no concern with ceremonial worship, though incidentally it takes it for granted;[8] it utters no warnings against the sin of idolatry, and it never rests its dicta upon the solemn prophetic authority: "Thus saith the Lord." Proverbs is perhaps most unlike prophecy in drawing no lessons from the past. Neither the history of Israel nor the Mosaic law is once mentioned, and there is not the slightest reference to the prophetic teachings, although the importance of prophecy is distinctly taught: "Where there is no vision the people perish!"[9]

In one striking respect the wisdom of the Hebrews found a higher level than human wisdom had elsewhere found: it had no place for agnosticism. To the Hebrew sage the search after wisdom was sure to be rewarded with success; it was possible for man to know: it was impossible that the honest seeker should fail to find the ultimate wisdom; that is, God. In the highest sense, then, though not to the consciousness of every wise man, wisdom was the divine philosophy. The Hebrew people were an inspired people; in a very true sense God was in all their thoughts, and this fact has put an ineffaceable seal upon all their secular — that is, their indi-

[8] Prov. 7: 14; 15: 8; 21: 27. [9] Prov. 29: 18.

vidualistic, as well as their sacred — that is, their national — writings.

III

The secret of the Hebrew wisdom is given in the motto which we find on the title-page of the book of Proverbs:

> The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge:
> But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction.[10]

This impressive truth may first have been formulated by the writer of this passage; but it is a universal truth. There has been no scientist or philosopher of note, since science and philosophy were, of whom reverence has not been a distinguishing — nay, a fundamental — characteristic. If "the undevout astronomer is mad," the irreverent scientist is an intellectual suicide. It is this implicit sense of reverence that raises above utilitarianism those precepts of the book of Proverbs which appear to be most worldly wise.

The moral value of this book is very great. Its morality is not very lofty, its motives are not the noblest; they are mainly prudential. "Be thou in the fear of Jehovah all the day long; for surely there is a reward." [11] But this is because the book is distinctly meant to be a practical work. It is utilitarian in contrast with the ideal-

[10] Prov. 1:7. [11] 23:17, 18.

istic teachings of the prophets, but its utilitarianism is not self-centered. Its aim was to raise the tone of national morality. The only possible appeal to the rank and file of the nation, at that period (we may almost say, of any nation, at any period) was to show by concrete examples the wisdom of morality.

Without question this book teaches that goodness is rewarded with worldly prosperity, and wickedness punished in this world. This was the firm belief of Israel, notwithstanding some facts which tended to contradict it. These facts caused great perplexity, but they did not suffice, in the early days, to shake the general conviction. When these proverbs first became current, this was the common belief; yet there is nothing ignoble in the utilitarianism of Proverbs. Like our own maxim, "Honesty is the best policy," it is grounded in a high moral truth.

Implicitly, if not explicitly, Proverbs tests conduct by the highest standards:

> A false balance is an abomination to Jehovah,
> But they that deal truly are his delight.[12]

This implicit recognition of the only true ethical standard gives this book great practical value.

> Righteousness exalteth a nation,
> But sin is a reproach to any people.[13]

[12] 11: 1. [13] 14: 34.

It has been said that one reason for the sterling if shrewd integrity for which the Scottish people have long been famous, is found in the fact that for many generations the book of Proverbs was the standard school reader.

The books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes suffer more than any other parts of the Bible by our present chapter and verse divisions, and by the lack of titles. It is possible so to separate and recombine the passages in both these books as to bring out a surprising degree of harmony and connection. The most obvious grouping is into books, of which Proverbs has five. All except the first have titles, but as these are printed right along with what follows, they are not generally noticed. The general title of the volume is very elaborate, as has been shown in several recent works. Perhaps the volume "Proverbs" in Professor Moulton's *Modern Readers' Bible* is the most readily accessible. The title is there shown to bear strong resemblance to the titles of many English books of the age of Milton or Addison, or of some modern novels:

THE PROVERBS OF SOLOMON.

THE SON OF DAVID, KING OF ISRAEL.

To know Wisdom and Instruction:
To discern the Words of Understanding:
To receive instruction in Wise Dealing:

In Righteousness and Judgment and Equity:
To give Subtilty to the Simple:
To the Young Man Knowledge and Discretion:
That the Wise Man may hear and increase in Learning:
And that the Man of Understanding may attain unto Sound Counsels:
To Understand a Proverb and a Figure:
The Words of the Wise
And their Dark Sayings.

The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of Knowledge:
But the Foolish despise Wisdom and Instruction.[14]

The first of the five books of which Proverbs is formed, chaps. 1–9, is a little Book of Sonnets, more elaborate in structure and more advanced in thought than any other part of the book of Proverbs; and for these reasons it is believed to have been written last. Its subject, the praise of wisdom, is the obvious reason why it is placed at the beginning of the first collection of Wisdom books. Its contents are not sonnets in the Italian or the English sense of a rhymed composition of fourteen lines. Their structure is far more free than that, as is evident from the fact that chaps. 2 and 5 are single sonnets, while other chapters contain three or four each. Yet they are evidently sonnets, since each contains a single scheme of thought, and this is the essential fact in a sonnet. Some of the shorter sonnets are exquisite in form; for instance, the one beginning, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard." All of

[14] 1: 1–7.

them are very elaborate, including all those forms of parallelism which characterize Hebrew poetry.

The description of Wisdom in chap. 8 is probably the most daring and sublime personification in all literature, and it is here that we find the vague recognition of natural law already alluded to. It speaks in the person of the heavenly Wisdom: [15]

I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning,
Or ever the earth was.
When there were no depths, I was brought forth,
When there were no fountains abounding with water.

Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills, was I brought into being;
While as yet he (Jehovah) had not made the earth,
Nor the fields,
Nor the beginning of the dust of the world.

When he established the heavens, I was there;
When he set a circle upon the face of the deep,[16]
When he made the skies above,
When the fountains of the deep became strong:
When he gave to the sea its bound,
That the waters should not transgress his commandment:

When he marked out the foundations of the earth,
Then I was by him
As a master-workman,

[15] Even a superficial reading shows how impossible it is that this should have been a prophecy of Christ, as is generally taught. Wisdom is here the *creature*, not the child, of God; "brought into being," not begotten; anterior to creation and an instrument in creation (vss. 29, 30).

[16] The old cosmological idea that the earth was a flat disk, the ocean surrounding the land, and being itself surrounded by a circular rim to keep it from running off.

And I was daily his delight;
Sporting always before him,
Sporting in his habitable earth;
And my delight was with the sons of men.[17]

The joy of the writer in this newly found truth of natural law is as interesting as it is naïve.

Chap. 10 begins with the words "The Proverbs of Solomon." Evidently this is a title, and it shows that these chapters were once a separate book.

This Book II consists entirely of couplets as simple in form as the sonnets of Book I are elaborate, for which reason it is believed by some to be the oldest part of the book of Proverbs. It is largely composed of old folklore — popular proverbs and maxims, such as every nation has; not given in their original form, however, but worked over into poetic couplets, interspersed with the Wise Man's own personal observations thrown into the same form.

At 22: 17–21 is found a new heading, showing that here we have another collection, once issued by itself. This heading is long and elaborate like that of Book I. "The Words of the Wise," in vs. 17, may be taken as a summary of the whole. Vs. 20, which is a part of the title, indicates that it may be considered as an epistle.

[17] Prov. 8: 23–31.

To this epistle someone has added a postscript of twelve verses at 24:23, beginning with, "These also are of the Wise." Both epistle and postscript differ from the preceding book in consisting, not of simple couplet proverbs, but of epigrams of four or more lines interspersed with a few couplet proverbs; each part, epistle and postscript, has one sonnet. In the epistle occurs the well-known "Riddle Sonnet on Intemperance," "The Mirror for Drunkards," [18] beginning with a sarcastic and extremely realistic imitation of the exclamations of the drunkard:

> Who hath *oi?*
> Who hath *aboi?*
> Who hath contentions?
> Who hath complainings?

In the postscript is the very artistic sonnet on the "Field of the Slothful." [19]

A fourth book begins at chap. 25, of which the first verse is evidently a title: "The Proverbs of Solomon Which the Men of Hezekiah Copied Out." This gives itself out, then, as a later collection than Book II, but it resembles that much more than it resembles any other of the five books of Proverbs. Like that, it consists mainly of two-lined proverbs, though these are interspersed with triplets and epigrams. The chief difference between them is a most interesting

[18] 23: 29–35. [19] 24: 30–34

one from a literary point of view, for it shows perhaps the earliest attempt at editing; many of the proverbs of the second collection being in clusters bearing on a single subject. For example, the first four proverbs [20] are on the characteristics of kings; in the next chapter is a group of four on the sluggard.[21] There are seven on social pests; [22] there is a cluster of nine proverbs of various lengths on fools.[23] There is also an exquisite little "Folk-Song of Good Husbandry," which in feeling for nature, though not in poetic beauty, reminds us of the "Spring Song" in Canticles.[24]

Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks,
And look well to thy herds;
For riches are not for ever;
And doth the crown endure unto all generations?
The hay is carried,
And the tender grass sheweth itself
And the herbs of the mountains are gathered in.
The lambs are for thy clothing,
And the goats are the price of the field:
And there will be goat's milk enough for thy food,
For the food of thy household;
And maintenance for thy maidens.

But, in the main, this book, like the other, consists of couplets — there are nearly ninety.

The fifth and last book includes a number of

[20] 25: 1–7.
[21] 26: 13–16.
[22] 25: 17–25.
[23] 26: 1–12.
[24] 27: 23, 27.

titles, and is evidently a collection of miscellany; nothing in this collection is attributed to Solomon. There is a group of sonnets, epigrams, and riddles, which, we are told, are the sayings of Agur;[25] there is the "Oracle of Lemuel's Mother,"[26] and there is the anonymous "Mirror for Wives,"[27] which in the Hebrew is an acrostic poem.

It is interesting to note that the nearest approach to agnosticism made in the Wisdom literature is found in the sayings of Agur, in a poem on the "Unsearchableness of God."[28]

Its poetic structure is interesting; the first strophe has three short lines followed by four long ones, the second strophe reverses the order, having four long lines followed by three short ones:

THE UNSEARCHABLENESS OF GOD

A Sonnet

I have wearied myself, O God,
I have wearied myself, O God,
And am consumed:
For I am more brutish than any man,
And have not the understanding of a man:
And I have not learned wisdom,
Neither have I *the knowledge of the Holy One.*

[25] Chap. 30.

[26] 31: 1–9.

[27] 31: 10–31.

[28] 30: 1*b*–4. The first three lines of the following sonnet follow an amended reading of the second clause of vs. 1.

Who hath ascended up into heaven, and descended?[29]
Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?
Who hath bound the waters in his garment?
Who hath established all the ends of the earth?
What is his name,
And what is his son's name,
If thou knowest?

To this agnostic utterance, however, Agur replies by an epigram that God may be found experimentally: "He is a shield to those who trust in him."[30] Agnosticism never has the last word in the Wisdom literature.

Though even a general classification like this lends considerable literary interest to the book of Proverbs, much of the book still appears fragmentary and illogical, and the mind soon wearies in reading it. This, indeed, is the case in reading a succession of short pieces of any kind. It is impossible for us to read very many even of the most beautiful lyrics at a sitting. This, however, appears to be a characteristic of the western mind. We find no reason to suppose that the oriental mind feels the necessity of logical sequence. Not merely the book of Proverbs, but the greater portion of the Koran and whole volumes of Arabian lore, consist of short sentences having no logical relation to one another. There is a bond of unity, but it usually consists less in the thought than in the form. A single word

[29] Christ referred to this in his conversation with Nicodemus.
[30] Vs. 5.

occurring in several sentences, like the group of proverbs on the king or on the fool, in the twenty-fifth chapter of Proverbs, is sufficient reason for their being placed together; or they are grouped together simply because they begin with the same letter, or with letters which follow in alphabetical order, like the acrostic psalms, or the "Mirror for Wives," in the last chapter of Proverbs.

Putting ourselves, so far as we are able, into the mental attitude of the oriental, we find that the book of Proverbs has a very true unity, and that this unity is preserved in a very artistic way under forms of great variety, and in a scope which, though restricted to subjects of practical interest, is enormously wide. What that unity is we have already seen — it is found in the reference, tacit or open, of all moral judgments to God. The title-page of the whole book announces that the fear of the Lord is the very beginning, the basis, of wisdom.

This God-consciousness is always latent. It is not always put into words. Yet there are many places where it is frankly confessed:

> The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life,
> To depart from the snares of death.[31]

There is a firm and unalterable faith that the world is governed justly:

[31] 14: 27.

The way of the Lord is a stronghold to the upright,
But it is a destruction to the workers of iniquity.[32]

There is a deep sense of the omnipotence of God:

The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the water-courses,
He turneth it wheresoever he will.[33]

Like the early prophets, the early Wise Men saw the deep truth of the absolute sovereignty of God, and prophets and sages were equally unable to apprehend the free will of man.

The Lord hath made everything for its own end,
Yea, even the wicked for the day of evil,[34]

is the proverbial form of the prophetic "I make peace and create evil."

Social duty stands on a religious basis:

He that is slack in his work
But he that hath mercy on the needy honoreth him.[35]

The duty of honest labor is strongly felt:

He that is slack in his work
Is brother to him that is a destroyer.[36]

Here the economic importance of diligence appears. The sense of relative duty in economic affairs is often found:

[32] 10: 29.

[33] 21: 1. A figure drawn from the irrigation practiced in garden culture. Cf. Ps. 1: 3; Jer. 31: 12.

[34] Prov. 16: 4. [35] 18: 9.

[36] 14: 31.

"Bad, bad," saith the buyer,
But when he is gone his way then he boasteth.[37]

There is a profound insight into the difference between false and true economy:

There is that maketh himself rich yet hath nothing:
There is that maketh himself poor yet hath great wealth;

and

There is that scattereth and increaseth yet more,
There is that withholdeth more than is meet,
But it tendeth to want.[38]

This, it will be remembered, was the basis of old Honest's riddle in the *Pilgrim's Progress:*

There was a man, though some did count him mad,
The more he cast away the more he had.

To which Gaius, the host, found the answer:

He that bestows his goods upon the poor,
Shall have as much again, and ten times more.

The high value set upon riches is chiefly because they are a token of the peculiar favor of God:

The blessing of the Lord it maketh rich,
And toil addeth knowledge thereto.[39]

This view, that prosperity is the sure reward of the righteous, is so firmly fixed that it is all the more impressive to find wealth so clearly subordinated to right conduct:

[37] 20: 14. [39] 10: 22.
[38] 13: 7; 11: 24.

Treasures of riches profit nothing,
But righteousness delivereth from death,

and

Better is the poor that walketh in his integrity,
Than he that is perverse in his way though he be rich.[40]

This sentiment occurs repeatedly.

These books give a very valuable insight into the domestic life of the time — the filial piety, the sense of parental responsibility, the confidence between husband and wife, the relations of confidence between master and slave, the reverence paid to old age:

The glory of young men is their strength,
And the beauty of old men is the hoary head.[41]

The very first proverb in the earliest collection brings out a clear view of family relationships:

A wise son maketh a glad father,
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.[42]

That the mother should be thus put on the same plane with the father as concerned in the conduct and character of the son is very impressive. The testimony of the book to the status of woman is particularly important in view of present-day theories of social evolution; the mother is everywhere joined with the father as

[40] 10: 2; 28: 6.
[41] 20: 29.
[42] 10: 1.

the equal claimant upon the reverence and esteem of the child:

> Let thy father and mother be glad,
> And let her that bare thee rejoice.[43]

As to the relations between husband and wife, we find everywhere the highest possible testimony to the exalted ideal prevalent:

> Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing,
> And obtaineth favor of the Lord.

> House and riches are an inheritance from the fathers,
> But a prudent wife is from the Lord.[44]

Yet it is true that there is much in this book of the "strange woman," of the contentious, noisy, quarrelsome woman; so much so as to lead some to think that the standard of womanhood in Israel must have been very low. But in truth those warnings show a very high appreciation of the influence of woman, and of the value of goodness in woman; they show that then, very much as now, the issues of life were felt to be actually in her hands, that everything depended on her being good and true. And not all the proverbs about women take the warning tone; the gracious woman who "retaineth honor," [45] the wise woman who "buildeth her house" [46]— that is, who is the basis of her family's stability — the good wife, are well known and highly ap-

[43] 23: 25.
[44] 18: 22; 19: 14.
[45] 11: 16.
[46] 14: 1.

preciated by the makers of these proverbs. Most of the religious systems of the world have suffered by overlooking woman, but the religious system of Israel no more than its moral code made that mistake. The last chapter of Proverbs gives a picture of an active, industrious, and very capable wife, but her virtues are not merely prudential. This woman is her husband's counselor, in whom his heart trusteth, who always does him good; she is far-sighted for opportunities, quick in perception, and independent in action to a very remarkable degree. She considereth a field and buyeth it; she is no clinging vine, strength and dignity are her clothing. And with all her sturdy virtues and independence she is a gracious woman, opening her mouth with wisdom and having the law of kindness on her tongue.

No doubt the book of Proverbs treats of illicit love, and perhaps some of us have gathered from it that this was a prevalent sin. But the very vigor of reprehension with which it is here treated speaks volumes for the high standard of sexual purity in Israel; no peoples of the present day take so high a stand as to what is practicable in this matter, and what society has a right to expect in this respect, as we find in the book of Proverbs.

The book of Proverbs holds to the triumph of the good in the great world-controversy between

good and evil. The rewards and punishments are indeed to be meted out in this world, through prosperity or the reverse; yet this view of life had at that time its great importance. The Wisdom literature, and especially the book of Proverbs, had this weighty part to play: to bring the minds of the people into sympathy with the prophetic teaching. The most inspired prophecy needs for full efficacy a prepared mind; the Wise Men of Israel did this work of preparation. It was as true in Israel as it is today among our colored people of the South, and as it is among all people everywhere, that no religion can be permanently uplifting which does not stand on a sound ethical basis. For the rank and file of the people, the unthoughtful who make up the majority of every community, those to whom practical sanctions make the strongest appeal, the Wise Men supplied the basis upon which the higher ethical teachings of the prophets could build themselves.

The Wisdom literature was especially valuable, on the other hand, in furnishing a link between prophecy and the best moral and intellectual attainments of other nations. They, too, had their wise men and their wisdom; the wisdom of Israel differed from them all in its firm ethical basis, and in the individualism which sprang from that. It furnished the bridge by which the best minds

of the gentiles could pass over to the high spirituality of Israel. We know that in the later centuries before the Christian era so large a proportion of the brightest minds of paganism had passed over to Judaism that Jewish proselytes were found in large numbers in every nation under heaven, and afterward formed the basis of the Christian church in gentile nations. This was largely due to the then widely read books of Wisdom, canonical and apocryphal.

V

The most potent in this respect of all these books was Ecclesiastes, or Kohéleth,[47] as it is more properly called. While thoroughly Hebrew, it forms a very important link with the philosophical literature of other peoples.

The fundamental characteristic of Hebrew philosophy, as we have seen in the book of Proverbs, is its religious basis: its very foundation is God. In Proverbs God is the wise and good Ruler of the world, the vague idea of law as his mode of ruling, entrancing as it was, not having yet, to the Hebrew mind, entered the moral sphere. "Wisdom," in which there appears to

[47] The Hebrew word is *Kohéleth;* it means, perhaps, "counselor;" it certainly does not mean "preacher," as those who gave the book the Greek name "Ecclesiastes" thought it did. Kohéleth is the proper name assumed by the writer. It is commonly held to be a name for Solomon, and unquestionably was intended to be so understood. But this is no more a testimony to the authorship of the book than the pronoun "I" of a modern novel.

be some dim adumbration of the notion of natural law, was the delight of God, something apart from him, lovely and beneficent, friendly to man, irresponsible, but very good. God ruled the world by its means, and because he ruled it right, therefore the good always prospered. This conviction, which was well-nigh universal in the Hebrew mind in a certain stage of its development, naturally resulted in the belief that affliction or a want of prosperity must argue wickedness. This doctrine was so firmly held that, as has been seen, the Psalmist was greatly puzzled at the prosperity of the wicked; and we shall find that Job's deepest suffering came from the prevalence of the same idea.

A conflict thus arose in thoughtful Hebrew minds, and from the cheerful but superficial optimism of Proverbs, convinced that all is for the best in the best of all possible worlds, many thinkers of Israel, gathering together the sum of human experiences as a basis for reflective generalization, and perceiving that after all the righteous did not always prosper, and that it often went well with the wicked, passed into a stage of pessimism, if we may use the word, not in its modern philosophic sense, but as a term for profound discouragement which finds no key to the enigma of life, yet does not utterly despair of the future, nor lose all belief in God. This

state of mind is very strongly set forth in Ecclesiastes, and from it, as we shall presently see, the author at last escaped by the doctrine of *providence.*[48]

The book has a peculiar charm, especially to the advanced in years. It is the only purely reflective work in the Old Testament, and there is a strange fascination in its pregnant sentences, shrewd reflections on things, applicable for all times, and utterances at least suggestive of profound spiritual truth. As a whole, however, it has generally been held to be rather incoherent, incapable of analysis, and without that single thread of purpose which gives unity to a book. Therefore this book has always been a puzzle to expositors, and it is only in comparatively recent years that anything like a satisfactory analysis has been wrought out.[49]

[48] It is possible that Kohéleth may not have followed Proverbs in the sequence of time. There are scholars who hold that it is earlier than the present form of Proverbs. But in the experience of life this appears to be the order. The folklore which is the material of Proverbs was ancient.

[49] How difficult is the work of analysis may be seen by a comparison of a few standard authors. Ginsberg and Cox make four divisions with prologue and epilogue; Bradley makes eight; Plumptre, ten; Wildeboer, fourteen; Driver says that it contains no clearly marked subdivisions, and Davidson (*Encyclopedia Biblica*) and Peake (Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*) agree with him in attempting none. Wildeboer, however, points out that Kohéleth repeatedly returns to the thought: "It is better to enjoy life than to philosophize over it." This thought, first brought to my notice by a casual remark of President Stewart, of Auburn, I have taken as the guiding principle in my analysis. Professor Genung includes in his summary of "the structural idea" of the book the thought that "life . . . must be its own reward and blessedness, or nothing;" but this thought does not govern his analysis.

With Proverbs and Job Ecclesiastes forms a trilogy working out the spiritual problem of humanity; not of Judaism only, but of all the ages. Proverbs stands at the beginning of this profound, and imperatively needed, study, with its question: What is good — that is, right — for me? Ecclesiastes lifts the subject to a far higher plane, asking from a wider spiritual horizon and a deeper nature: What is the chief good for man? And Job triumphantly crowns the process by opening up the deep mystery of the absolute good.[50]

Kohéleth has been called, and in a sense he has been correctly called, a pessimist; and from failure to perceive the natural and important place of pessimism in the development of thought, in the attainment of a sound ethical basis for religion, some devout scholars have deemed his book far less worthy of a place in the canon than that, in general, fine collection of proverbs and reflections included in the apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus.[51] The Jews themselves thought little of Ecclesiastes. It was never taught in their

[50] This appears to me to be the thought sequence, entirely irrespective of the question of the date of writing or final redaction of any of these books. Job is doubtless earlier than the final redaction of Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes is probably the latest of the three. But it is nothing unusual in the history of human thought that one man should come a generation or several centuries too soon. Job was probably not more before his time than Bruno.

[51] Kohéleth takes a weighty place in the canons of the Old Testament. It is a valuable document in the history of Israel's unparalleled religion."— Wildeboer in *Die fünf Megillot*, p. 119.

schools, nor read in the synagogues, and it is nowhere directly referred to in the New Testament, though there are clear evidences of its influence in the writings of Paul and James. Its purpose has been variously apprehended, but in general the dictum, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," has been held to be its keynote; it is taken as the discouraged utterances of one who had exhausted all forms of pleasure, worthy and unworthy, and found all alike stale, flat, and unprofitable.

I think that a search into the literary structure of this book, with an apprehension of the writer's understanding of the word "judgment," will show us that the author of Ecclesiastes, busy in reflecting upon all the facts of a varied experience to ascertain this *summum bonum*, this "chief good," or, as he himself states it, the "profit,"[52] the net result to be gained from life's experiences, though a pessimist, is at least not a coward; that, in fact, he is brave and determined, and though his experiences have been for the most part sad, in the end by virtue of his courage he wins through to hope.[53] He sees that things have their ups and downs; there is a

[52] "What profit hath man in all his labors that he laboreth under the sun?" (1:3). This is the key of the book. It is, in fact, the search for the chief good.

[53] "An earnest man who doubts much that others lightly believe, but will not for that give up the faith of his childhood — that is Kohéleth."— Wildeboer, *op. cit.*

time for everything, for adversity and sorrow as well as for prosperity and mirth. It is his evil fortune to live, he thinks, in a bad time, but he does not teach, with modern pessimists, that everything is going on from bad to worse; on the contrary, he cherishes a despairing hope that things will take a turn some day, and that be up which now is down. He is no doubt a disappointed man; again and again he has failed in his quest of the chief good, but he is too much in earnest, too confident that it may be found, to give up the search. He has advanced beyond the superficial optimism of Proverbs, certain that God always rewards the righteous with prosperity and sends afflictions upon the wicked. His observation of life goes deeper than that: one of the vanities that he has found done upon earth is that "there be righteous men unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked: again there be wicked men to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous." It bewilders him, yet he does not hug his doubts; his fixed purpose is to scatter them; that there can be any faith in "honest doubt" is to him inconceivable.

But to say that Ecclesiastes shows all this after the manner of a philosophic treatise, whether a work of formal logic, such as our ancestors wrote, or a work in which inquiry is pursued

under literary forms, as in thoughtful books of today, is to say what is not the case; to expect this of the book would be to misunderstand the genius of the Wisdom literature, and, in fact, of the oriental mind. Ecclesiastes is not a philosophical treatise, but a series of essays, somewhat like those of Montaigne or Bacon or Emerson. They have a thread of connection, but it is rather that of a suite in music than that of a consecutive course of argument or reflection.[54]

VI

Words of Kohéleth

Son of David, King in Jerusalem

This first verse is the title of the book, which consists of eight chapters, in which life is surveyed from as many points of view, with prologue and epilogue. The prologue, which includes vss. 1–11 of the first chapter, strikes the keynote. Kohéleth is profoundly, and very unfavorably, impressed with the workings of that natural law which the writer in Proverbs had joyfully personified as Wisdom. His characterization of it is the leading motive of the earlier essays, and in a sense of the whole book: "Vanity of vanities," saith Kohéleth, "vanity of vanities — all is vanity."

[54] It is interesting to note how often musical forms are a key in Hebrew literature. This is especially the case in the prophets, as there is no opportunity here to show.

The inexorable nature of law seems to him as to the last degree discouraging, because by its workings everything goes around in a circle, with no progress, and therefore no hope. Generation goeth and generation cometh, and the earth abideth forever. The sun ariseth and the sun goeth down and cometh panting back[55] to the place where he ariseth. The wind bloweth toward the south and turneth about unto the north; all the streams run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place whence the streams come, thither they go again.

To this son of many generations who had traced every event, evil as well as good, directly to the hand of God, this first dawn of science, this first faint recognition of the reign of law, must needs have been profoundly depressing and bewildering. Is law stronger than God? It is not surprising that to him "all things are full of weariness; man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing nor the ear filled with hearing." For all things seem to have become a mere treadmill of profitless activity—"That which hath been done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun." Yet Kohéleth does not summarily decide that this is all: he determinately sets himself to search

[55] Professor Genung's literal and significant translation. "The unwearied sun pants through his daily round," says Dean Bradley (*Lectures on Ecclesiastes*).

whether or not it is so, hoping to find an escape from this inexorable wheel of nature in a supreme good — a Power, that is, which is above law and can subordinate it to his own will; can wring "profit," progress, from that which by its very constitution yields none.

The first essay, which goes from 1 : 12 through chap. 2, shows "good sought in experience." In this essay, and probably through the book, the writer assumes the personality of Solomon, the ideal of wisdom and happiness, who might be supposed to make the search under the most hopeful conditions. He would test everything that men call good and find what profit it yields. First, "wisdom" : "I applied my heart to survey and search by wisdom into all that is done under heaven. . . . . I acquired greater wisdom than all who were in Jerusalem before me"— but only to find that in much wisdom is much sadness, and to multiply knowledge is to multiply sorrow.

Then he tried mirth, but found it mad; and pleasure, but found it vanity. He tried what pomp of life would do; he builded houses and made gardens and parks, gathered silver and gold and all the delights of the sons of men; he kept not his heart back from any joy, and behold, "all was vanity and a chase after wind, and there was no profit under the sun."

Then he turned to compare wisdom and folly, and though he finds that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness, yet "one event befalleth them all." "A fate like that of the fool will befall me, even me: to what end then am I wiser?" So this, too, is vanity.

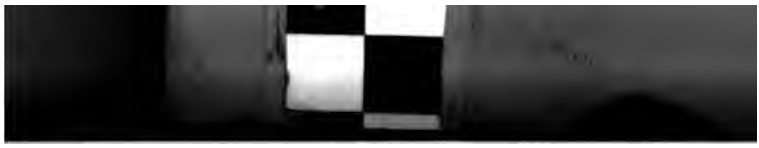
Again he seeks the chief good in labor, in the production of wealth; but this, too, fails, for he must leave it to the man who would come after him, and who can tell whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Kohéleth revolved all this until it made his heart despair. "There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink;" yet he perceives that even this is not in his own power, it also is subject to law —"for who can eat and who can enjoy himself apart from him?" Almost unconsciously he has sounded the note that is to ring ever clearer through all its quest: "Life itself is good, since God is in it all! Be glad!" Yet for the moment the thought of his own impotence overwhelms him; "this also is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The second essay, "The Philosophy of Times and Seasons," occupies chap. 3. Kohéleth sets himself to discover a justifying theory of the universe, the iron law which so enthrals him. Looking away from the narrow sphere of his own experience, he considers the cosmic order. It affords him no relief. What profit in a scheme

of things which fixes, not the most fitting, the most suitable, but the inevitable time? Again, is law stronger than God? Yet here he dimly perceives an escape from the wheel of law, because "God has put eternity in man's heart."[56] He seems to be conscious of some realm in which God is himself the Master of law, though that consciousness is too vague to enable man "to find out the work which God hath wrought there." Yet it is enough to bring him again to the conclusion, "Be glad!"[57] God has given it to men to rejoice and do good, to eat, drink, and enjoy.

Here is dimly adumbrated that confidence in the judgment of God which shines out effulgently at the close of the book, and which is so essential an element in the joy of the later Hebrew writers. Kohéleth has as yet found no place in the world of time for this judgment, this divine criticism of life; the inexorable wheel of things grinds on; "that which is hath been long ago, God maketh to return that which is past." The vanity of things again rushes over him; what profit is there in a judgment the only outcome of which is that men learn that by nature they are beasts? "For one hap befalleth them: as dieth the one so dieth the other," and "all is vanity." Yet again, for the second time in this essay,[58] he returns to his

[56] 3: 11. [57] 3: 12, 13. [58] 3: 22; cf. vs. 13.



conclusion, "Be glad!" This is man's portion, it is the gift of God. He has not yet won through to the true reason. His present conclusions may be "the human soul's effort to anestheticize itself," [59] but this is not the end.

This conclusion leads not unnaturally to a consideration of human nature; and the third essay deals with "The Deceptions and Inconsistencies of Men" (chaps. 4, 5). There are oppressions on the part of some, and tears on the part of others, and sorrowing ones have no comforter. There are envyings between equals, and even the successful man has a dissatisfied heart. "For whom," he saith, "do I labor?" What is the good of it all? Some things, indeed, are better than others: "two are better than one; a poor and wise child is better than an old and foolish king;" it is better to be careful in religious observance than recklessly to make God angry; the lot of the underfed laborer is better than that of the surfeited rich; but the experience of all alike is profitless, for "as man came naked into the world, so altogether as he came he must go." But just here comes another flash of that light toward which Kohéleth is groping. After all, there is profit. There is joy in the fulfilment of common duty. To rejoice in his labor comes not from the working out of law; this is the gift of

[59] Davidson in *Encyclopedia Biblica*.

God, something over and above. He has said it before; he understands it better now. God is not bound by law, he can respond even to the mood of man, and man "will not much remember the days of his life, when God respondeth to him in joy of heart."

VII

The flash of light was only a flash, and in the fourth essay (6:1—7:14) the inexorableness of law reasserts itself in that fatalistic guise which has such power over the eastern mind, although by marvelous exception it was never a Hebrew characteristic. Kohéleth points out that men may have great possessions without enjoyment; man with the noblest purposes and the most strenuous efforts cannot shake himself free from the power of irresponsible law. He almost reaches fatalism here.

Why should one care for anything — weak and impotent that he is? Whatever he is, his character and destiny were fixed before he was born, his name was given him long ago, and it is known that man is (merely) *man;* and "what profit therefore to him? For who knoweth what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth like a shadow?"

Who knoweth? With characteristic bravery Kohéleth sets himself to find his way out of the dark cloud of pessimism which has enwrapped

him, by seeking for the relatively better, even though there be no absolutely good.

A good name is better than good nard
And the day of death better than the day of one's birth.
Wisdom is a shelter
And wealth is a shelter,
But the advantage of wisdom is [not that it enables one to control events but]
That it fortifieth the heart of them that have it.[60]

With a heart thus fortified he can contemplate the work of God, and though in it he still finds no room for human initiative, since none "can make straight that which he hath made crooked," yet again he can return to his conclusion: "Be glad" in the day of prosperity, and in the day of adversity still be glad, since wisdom, contemplating the work of God, and perceiving that it is he who puts one side by side with the other, perceives that it is better that man should not find out anything after him,[61] but should trust himself to God. Here at last is progress. Kohéleth has reached something definite, something which he grasps during all his further quest. In the very existence of God is implied that guarantee of good, that providence, which shall offset, which may even overcome, the natural and otherwise inevitable workings of law.

"Good is wisdom"[62] was a conclusion of

[60] 7: 1–12.
[61] 7: 13, 14.
[62] 7: 11.

Kohéleth in the fourth essay. In the fifth essay (7:15 — 8:15) he returns to consider, "Wherein is wisdom good?" On the whole, the reply is disappointing. Nothing seems to go right; righteous men perish through their very righteousness, and wicked men prolong life through their very evil-doing. It is not worth while to be too righteous nor to rack one's brains too much about the meaning of things, Yet it is well to have something of both, for "he that feareth God shall come forth from them all." There are many things that he cannot comprehend; wisdom is far from him; he is perplexed by the ways of men, and particularly embittered by those of women. "God made man upright," but women (the pronoun is feminine) "have sought out many inventions." Woman is unquestionably, to his mind, one of the chief foes, not so much of goodness as of happiness; yet in a later hour and happier mood he shows a very keen appreciation of the joys of wedded love. There are benefits in wisdom, but they are doubtful. A wise man's heart knows time and judgment, yet he cannot know that which shall be. Law is arbitrary and irresponsible; but he has become convinced that God is stronger than law and can bend it to his good will — the doctrine, that is, of providence.

With this doctrine as a light he can consider

in the sixth essay (8:16—9:10) "The Futility of Wisdom as a Key to the Riddles of Experience." "Man cannot fathom the work that is done under the sun. All things come alike to all, one event happens to the righteous and to the wicked." Kohéleth seems to be very near the abyss of fatalism here; he escapes from it by the conclusion that everything is in the hand of God, and that to be friends with him is to be on the side of one who can, and sooner or later will, intervene for his aid, subordinating law to his own righteousness. Therefore he can return with new emphasis to his old conclusion, "Be glad!" "There is nothing better for man under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad," [63] to enjoy the good that God has provided. What though "man cannot fathom the work [of God] that is wrought under the sun?" What though it is all inscrutable — and Kohéleth gives many instances of this — yet it is God's work, not the work of blind and arbitrary law; and therefore man may be glad. "Go thou, eat thy bread with gladness and drink with merry heart thy wine, for already hath God accepted thy works." [64]

In the seventh essay, "Time and Chance" (9:11—11:8), Kohéleth returns to the question of timeliness, which was the subject of the second essay, and of fate (or chance), which

[63] 8:15. [64] 9:7.

was the subject of the fourth. The essay contains several well-conceived little parables[65] and several probable allusions to events of Kohéleth's own time.[66] It shows a deep personal acquaintance with life and human nature, often clothed in pregnant aphorisms.[67] This essay includes several very poetic passages, especially a quatrain which in a sense sums up the philosophy of life as Kohéleth understands life. "In the morning sow thy seed, and at eve slacken not thy hand, for thou knowest not which shall prosper, this or that, or whether both shall be alike good."[68] It closes with a new call to "Be glad!" based upon the actual sweetness of life,[69] yet with so much progress in the thought as is found in the reminder that the best happiness is found where life is in harmony with law.

VIII

Appropriately following this summing up, the eighth essay (11:9—12:7) begins with the call to be glad. This is now in its proper place, for gladness has at last found its true basis in the judgment of God. The essay proper is very

[65] 10:14, 15.

[66] 10:16, 17.

[67] A special interest attaches to 10:9 because of its close resemblance to one of the *Logia* or "Sayings" of our Lord found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt several years ago.

[68] 11:6.

[69] 11:7, 8.

short, including only the last four verses of chap. 11, and being followed by a sonnet, which is undoubtedly the most beautiful sonnet in the Bible. In the essay Kohéleth solves his dark problem by finding the chief good in the certitude of judgment — that is, of a final setting right — by which God will repair the errors due to the workings of natural law:

> Rejoice, O young man in thy *youth*, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in that which thine eyes desire; and know that for all these God will bring thee into judgment. Banish *therefore* care from thy mind, and put away sadness from thy flesh, for childhood and youth are Vanity.

That is, they are what they are in accordance with natural law.

No doubt many have read the line about judgment as a threat, and considered the words "Rejoice, O young man," etc., as sarcastic. But this is not Kohéleth's attitude toward judgment. To him, and to the devout Israelite of his time and after, judgment was an event hoped for, the time that would compensate for all the sorrows and pains of life. Israel was God's child: the final reckoning must be one of joy. The psalms are so full of this eager looking-forward to judgment that it is a wonder so few of us have recognized this:

> Let the heavens rejoice and let the earth be glad
> Before Jehovah; for he cometh,

For he cometh to judge the earth,
And the people with his truth.[70]

And again:

Let the hills sing for joy together
Before Jehovah; for he cometh to judge the world.
With righteousness shall he judge the world,
And the people with equity.[71]

Yes, though wisdom had failed to satisfy the yearning of the man who longed for the Chief Good, though he had found pleasure vanity, and toil and labor and love and beauty but vanity and vexation of spirit, though he had learned that

Nor man nor nature satisfy
Whom only God created,

yet at last the quest is accomplished, the sought is found: in trust in God as the Chief Good. With God his friend, man may well rejoice in the pleasures which God gives his children, in sweet household joys and in the gratification of high purpose; for all are ennobled and made sacred with the confidence that God watches over all, and brings all acts to the pure and impartial bar of his judgment. There the long-desired Chief Good awaits man. And so the sonnet follows, bidding men remember the Creator who will also be the judge.

After this comes the epilogue (12:8–14), summing up the result of all this travail of

[70] Ps. 96:11, 13. [71] 98:8, 9.

thought. Having reached the point of rejoicing in God's providence, it seems strange to find this epilogue beginning: "All is vanity." But this is only to lead up to the true thought: "Fear God." But it is not for nothing that these two thoughts appear here side by side. Together they gather up in one the thoughts of the whole book. Life without God, life, however fortunate, subject merely to natural law, is but vanity; life with him, however mysterious, is full of hope and joy. Thus he sums up:

The conclusion of the whole matter is this:
That God taketh cognizance of all things.
Fear Him therefore [enter into allegiance with Him], and
keep His commandments.
For this it behooveth every man to do;
Since God will bring every deed to the judgment
Appointed for every secret thing,
Whether it be good or whether it be bad.

For the judgment of God, being just and right, must be the joy and not the dread of him who desires not to disobey, and not to live apart from, that God of the universe who can bend all things, even universal law, to serve his righteous ends.

CHAPTER IX

THE SEARCH FOR SPIRITUAL CERTAINTY[1]

I

The book of Job is the third[2] in a trilogy occupied with the question of morals. The first, Proverbs, is eminently practical, asking: What is *good* — that is, *right* — for me? The second, Ecclesiastes, advances to the theoretical, asking the question which has occupied the philosophers of all ages: What is the Supreme Good? though having this advantage over most other metaphys-

[1] I take pleasure here in owning my debt to Professor Genung for his translation of Job in *The Epic of the Inner Life*, which in general I have used. I cannot agree with him in his statement of the problem or motive of Job (*ibid.*, p. 23). It seems to me that that was Satan's problem, not Job's. Not the moral possibilities of man, but the moral character of God, is the problem which tortures Job. It appears to me to be a far deeper and more insistent problem than can be formulated, as many others have formulated it, in the words: "Why do the righteous suffer?" That is a part of the question; or rather, the search for its answer opens up a far deeper question.

To acknowledge all I owe to other writers, notably Davidson, Ewald, and Cheyne, would be tedious, if it were not impossible. Their teachings have passed into the fiber of my mind. I do not know what of all I have written is theirs, or whether anything at all is mine, unless it be that idea of law as the golden clue to this trilogy, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, to which I have already alluded.

[2] Third in the order of thought, not of time. It was probably written two centuries or more before Ecclesiastes. But this is only to say that in Israel, as among all peoples, there are men of genius whose experience has confronted them with certain moral problems before their time.

ical works, that it treats the question as one of practical importance. The third volume of the trilogy, Job, lifts the question into the domain of the purely speculative, asking: What is the Absolute Good? But Job has this superiority over other works of speculative philosophy that it finds its question still a practical question, the solution of all problems of human experience depending upon its answer.

But the moral question is not the only special characteristic of these books of Wisdom. They appear to stand apart, not only from other Old Testament literature, but from the sacred literature of all ancient peoples, by their conception of the physical universe in its relation to God. The writer of the opening chapters of Proverbs appears to have anticipated the thought of far later centuries, by some dim perception of the stupendous fact that the physical world is ruled by law. The discovery was to him one of ineffable joy. The beauty of it, the magnificence of it, took hold of him. Physical law was to him the wisdom of God, the delight of God, the eternal power by which he made the worlds, always beneficent, always glad, sporting always before God, sporting in his habitable earth, and her delight with the sons of men.

This sublime and glad conception was amply borne out, in that early time, by human experi-

ence. In the simple days of Israel's early history the righteous prospered. In that stage of social evolution where men live by agriculture and cattle-raising, it is the diligent, sober, faithful man, the man who fears the Lord and walks in his ways, who is blessed. The early sages of the book of Proverbs perceived in this fact a fundamental truth, which, however, they would not have formulated in these terms, that the welfare of man depends on his being in harmony with universal law, that is, with the Heavenly Wisdom. For generations this principle was the secular faith of the Hebrew people. But as social conditions became more complicated it often came to pass that the wicked prospered. This fact, as we saw in our study of Ecclesiastes, greatly perplexed the thoughtful and religious man. Its tendency was to pessimism. Law was indeed there, but, far from being delightful, it was inexorable and cruel to man; it was not wisdom, but vanity; and from pessimism Kohéleth escaped only by the doctrine of providence; that God is stronger than law, and can bend it to his own righteous purposes. This doctrine, with all its difficulties, is still held by the majority of religious persons, who, not being philosophers, do not formulate, though they may feel, its difficulties.

But as time went on, a darker problem than the

prosperity of the wicked assailed the thoughtful sage. Not only did the wicked prosper, but the righteous were often afflicted. To many an Israelite this seemed to open the door to atheism. Dark thoughts of God began to arise: Was he, after all, a good God? Was he just? Was he doing right? There were those who gave up the problem and accepted the dreadful answer; wearying God, as Malachi says, by affirming, "Everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of Jehovah and he delighteth in them;" and, "Where is the God of judgment?"[3] That is, not that there is no God — only the fool ever said that — but there is no just God, no God of judgment. It was in the awful dread of such a conclusion that the psalmist cried importunately:

> O God, Jehovah, to whom vengeance belongeth,
> Thou God to whom vengeance belongeth,
> Show thyself!
> Arise, thou judge of the world,
> And reward the proud after their deserving![4]

It was in this dark doubt of the character of God that the book of Job was written. Hearts tortured with the perplexity of mundane events were asking: "On what may we rest our confidence that God is good? Can the Power that rules the world be trusted to rule it right? What certainty of absolute goodness have we?"

[3] Mal. 2: 17. [4] Ps. 94: 1.

This awful question perpetually returns to torture those whose foundations have been broken up by overwhelming affliction or by profound and painful observation of events. The noblest verse of Tennyson and Browning, the strongest prose of Carlyle, are strenuous with the same question: "Is there an absolute Good? Is a thing right simply because an all-powerful and irresponsible Being has decreed it so? Or is there a sure basis of goodness?"

This is the problem of humanity. Centuries before Moses, a Chaldean king was praying "to the lady of Nineveh, the lady of heaven and earth, who receives prayers . . . . the merciful goddess who loves justice," in almost the very words of Job:

In what have I sinned against thee?
Why hast thou allotted me diseases — boils and pestilence?
Is this thy just decree?
As one who did honor to thy divinity am I afflicted?
If I have not commited sin and evil
Why am I thus smitten?

With this question the poets of Greece travailed as in the throes of birth, and never brought forth an answer. *Prometheus Bound* is the tragedy of tragedies, not because of the indescribable torture to which the Titan is condemned, not even because in the throes of an endless agony he remains true to himself, maintains his integrity, bates not

one jot of his contention that he has done well in giving the heavenly fire to man, but because in his extremity of woe he has to do with an unmoral god, who punishes as he rewards, from mere caprice. No wonder that the world's greatest poets, being Greeks, were tragic poets. The world's history would be one long tragedy but for the spiritual certainty to which that eastern Prometheus, Job, did at last attain, at the price of an agony not less terrible than that of the Titan who lay chained to the rock on Caucasus, with the vulture forever pecking at his vitals.[5]

II

The book in which the problem of the moral character of God was first worked out to its very last element, this book of Job, goes far deeper in its conception of the universe than the two which precede it. In Job the mystery of law is seen to be far more profound than had yet been recognized. It is not now a question of the relation of man to universal law, but the relations of God himself to this law. The solution which would satisfy a Kohéleth is manifestly inadequate to bring peace to the tried and tortured Job. He must gain a truer view of the character of God

[5] I have been admonished in this place that the certainty which Job sought was an ethical, not a spiritual, certainty, and that therefore this study is misnamed. Without attempting to argue the question, I would answer that it seems to me that ethical certainty is possible only when it has a spiritual basis.

and his relations to the world, if he is to have any God at all; and it seems to me that the clue to the entire process of Job's thought, the golden thread by which he finds his way through all the mazes of agonized questioning, is still the idea of law in the conception of God as Judge — the same view of the blessedness of judgment which is the basis of Kohéleth's doctrine of Providence. It is by the help of this golden clue that Job does at last emerge from his darkness into the full light of spiritual certainty.

This book of Job may or may not be historic in its setting. So far as its authority is concerned, this is no more a matter of importance than that the Prodigal Son should have been a historic character. The setting of Job is, however, so true to life that the internal evidence of the book makes it more than probable that the story is historic. The book does not profess to be a work of history: nobody can suppose that Job and his friends actually talked to one another in long poems. It is a work of philosophy, cast in precisely such a form as delights the Hebrew mind, and based upon what was perhaps a historic incident, not only because the incident was marvelously adapted to serve the writer's purpose in the development of his thought, but also from the difficulty which abstract thought always presented to the Hebrew people.

The literary structure of the book, though elaborate, is simple; it is a dramatic poem set in a framework of pure epic: the prologue of chaps. 1 and 2, the epilogue in the closing verses of the last chapter, and a few verses at the beginning of the last act, 32: 1–5.

Between the prologue and the epilogue lies the drama in five acts.

The scene of the drama of Job is Hauran, the lovely volcanic region east of the Jordan, called in Genesis [6] and Lamentations [7] the Land of Uz. The period of the story is the patriarchal age, and it is to be observed that Job is not an Israelite, though all the personages are descendants of Abraham through Ishmael, Esau, and the sons of Keturah. Job is a true Arab sheik or emir, the village judge, the priest of the household, very wealthy, celebrated for wisdom and piety, with a deep appreciation of sin and of parental responsibility, which made him offer sacrifices for any possible transgressions of his children — a wholehearted, that is, perfect, man.

III

So far as the prologue [8] deals with the earthly scene, it is clearly an ancient and well-known folktale; and the profound thinker and deeply in-

[6] Gen. 36: 28.
[7] Lam. 4: 21.
[8] Job 1 — 2: 10.

spired writer who made this ancient tale the vehicle of a new revelation knew better than to change the time-honored form which, by its familiarity, would make all the more intelligible the profound teachings he desired to base upon it. The symbolic numbers and the poetic structure of the four announcements of woe are left just as he found them; but the scenes in heaven are no part of the ancient story. They are the result of the writer's search for the Absolute Good through the dark mystery of the government of the world, and it appears to me that they are intended to furnish the key to that dark enigma, the sufferings of the righteous, which impelled the writer to his deeper search. Incidentally in these scenes appears the unalterable conviction of the Hebrew people that evil as well as good comes from the hand of God. There is no dualism in the Bible, no kingdom of evil perpetually at war with, and at times gaining victory over, the will of God.

The first heavenly scene[9] opens with the assembly of all the sons of God (beings created before the present earthly order, ministers of his to do his pleasure) in such a council or divan as eastern monarchs hold. The Satan is among them; he is not a devil, but one of the sons of God, who appears to be in charge of this world

[9] 1: 6–12.

and comes to report at the heavenly divan what he has learned from "hurrying to and fro on the earth and pacing up and down on it;" (the "Busy One," as the Arabs call him; the "Peripatetic," as he is in Peter's epistle). From the question put to him by God, "Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth?" it may be conjectured that it was his duty to detect the sins and defects of men; and this accords with the significance of the word "Satan," which is not a name, but a title — the "Adversary" of men.

The pride which God takes in his servant Job is very striking. It arouses the Satan's passion for detecting faults. "Does Job serve God for naught?" Does he not find his advantage in it — is he not rich in flocks and herds and children? "Take these away and see if he will not renounce thee to thy face." [10] We know the outcome of the first trial, and how, bereft of all that makes

[10] Godet, in his *Etudes bibliques* — a work to which, after twenty years, Budde, who had just discovered it, pays tribute — strikingly points out a fact which appears to have been hitherto overlooked, namely, that the Satan's doubt of Job reflects upon God himself. "For if the best of men cannot love God unselfishly, it follows that he is incapable of making himself lovable." The Satan's error touches the very heart of God. In accepting his challenge to prove the disinterested love of Job, God is in fact accepting a challenge to prove his own moral character. It is "a solemn wager between God and Satan." This view, which Budde adopts, appears to me to lend strong support to the view of the problem here advanced. Budde's *Das Buch Hiob* appeared after these chapters were written, and came to my knowledge only as I was giving them their final revision. To him I owe the introduction to the volume by Godet.

life valuable. Job was perfectly submissive to the will of God:

> Naked came I from my mother's womb
> And I shall return thither naked.
> "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken,
> Blessed be the name of the Lord." [11]

This is the groundwork of the drama. In the beginning Job had no doubt of the moral character of God. Though he had bereft him of all, "Job did not impute wrong to God." [12] It soon became a question whether he must be forced to do so.

Very pathetic is the appeal of Jehovah in the next assembly of the heavenly divan.[13] The Satan had mockingly doubted that Job would serve God "for naught." "Yet still he holdeth fast his integrity," says God, "although thou movedst me against him to afflict him for naught." The Satan replies with an adage — "Satan's old saw," Browning calls it — which we may render freely, "Anything to save dear life," — the meanest, lowest, most contemptible doctrine ever put into the mouth of man or devil. Again God permits the Satan to test his servant. The living death, elephantiasis, falls upon the whole-hearted man, driving him from the home which else he might infect, to that refuge of the diseased, the

[11] 1: 21.
[12] 1: 22; Davidson's translation.
[13] 2: 1–6.

towering village ash-heap, built of the refuse of centuries. Now at last his wife, until now equally afflicted with himself and till now equally patient, but unable to endure the suffering of one so dear, urges him to escape from living death by way of suicide; to "greet God and die." [14] In this advice Job, to his utter surprise, finds his wife speaking not like her wise self, but like the foolish woman.[15] But Job's allegiance is still wholehearted:

> Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord
> And shall we not receive evil?

"Not even with his lips," the record says, "did Job sin." [16]

Now there is far more in this prologue than a mere stage-setting for the drama which follows.

[14] This word, translated so mistakenly "curse" in the Authorized Version, is translated "renounce" in the Revised Version and in a number of independent translations. It is, in fact, the word *barak*, "bless." The analogy of present usage, not only among Semitic peoples, but others, appears to show that its meaning here is simply "salute" or "greet." The same word is used both for meeting and for farewell, in many places besides Syria. The Provençal peasants say *adieu* on meeting as well as parting; those of the Black Forest say *Grüss Gott* (precisely the word here) in the same way. One is reminded of the Greek χαίρετε, and even more significantly of the Latin *moritari salutamus*, which is precisely the meaning here. There is no necessary suggestion of renunciation here, although in 1:5 there evidently is. When belief in personal immortality is not held, to die is naturally to take farewell of God. *Laisse là Dieu, et meurs*, is Godet's translation.

[15] It seems not amiss here for a woman to say a word in defense of a much misunderstood woman. Job's wife must have suffered quite as much as Job in the loss of their children and little less than he in the loss of their property. The only woe which is to her intolerable is that in which she herself has no share.

[16] Vs. 10.

Its meaning is one that has been lost sight of in the interest of all that follows; but it is of the greatest importance. To whom was the disinterested love of Job to be proven, except to those sons of God to whom in this ordeal, no less than to Job, the moral character of God was at stake?[17] For the sake of the moral lesson to the sons of God, the Satan is permitted to go on testing the man of integrity to the very limit of his mortal powers. Let us apply this key to the dark riddles of our own afflictions, and what light breaks in upon them from the throne of God!

IV

Job had probably sat for some months on his ash-heap (months of vanity, he says, had been made his heritage, and nights of weariness had been allotted him), when he was joined by three venerable friends, who had at last heard of his affliction by the slow methods of the time. As the three emirs drew near the place where Job sat on his ash-heap, they were appalled by the shocking change in their friend. Hardly recognizing him in his sad disfigurement, they involuntarily made the customary signs of mourning for the dead, and then, crouching down beside

[17] As Godet says, the author is far more concerned with the conduct of God than with that of man.

him, for seven days, the period of mourning for the dead, no one spoke a word.

Such sympathy, all the more expressive and touching that it was mute, brought home to Job with a new vividness the horror of his situation. Till this time he had been a model of patient submission, but now, with a sudden revulsion of feeling which everyone who has suffered long will understand, his calm resignation is changed to a tumult of wild despair. He breaks out into loud cries, "the language of intolerable pain."

Here begins the first act of the drama.[18] Job opens his mouth and, like another Jeremiah, curses his day. To the Hebrew a "day" was almost an objective reality; "the day of the Lord" was the embodiment of hope, fear, wrath, retribution; the day of one's birth was in a peculiar sense a personal possession. To Job his birthday was a malevolent entity, forcing existence upon one who would better have been without it. He would have it blotted from the number of days, that it might never recur with the revolving year to make men wretched:

Let those who ban days (astrologers) ban it,
(Those) who are of skill to rouse the Dragon.[19]
Let it long for light and see none,
Nor let it behold the eyelids of the dawn;

[18] Job, chap. 3.
[19] Which every evening swallowed up the sun.

Because it shut not up the doors of the womb that bore me
And hid not trouble from mine eyes!

Then, pierced with the sharp sense of the injustice of things: "Why does God force the wretched to live on? Why does he, even now, refuse me the last privilege of death and nothingness?"

Wherefore is light given to the wretched
And life to the bitter in soul?
Who long for death but it cometh not,
And search for it more than for hid treasure:
Who would be glad even to exulting
And blithe, when they find a grave.

Job's friends are shaken out of their kindly silence by the terror of cries like these. Why, this is not their idea of Job, that saintly man, beloved of God! How can such a man speak words so unfitting? There must be some dark reason, some secret sin, successfully concealed from men, but known of God, so to change his character.

V

It is of course Eliphaz, the man gifted with the prophetic spirit, who speaks first.[20] He begins apologetically; his whole speech is marked by courtesy, though here and there he involuntarily reveals his secret conviction that Job is a great sinner. But this he does not mean to do. With

[20] Act II, Job, chaps. 4–14.

gentlest words he utters his surprise that one who has so often comforted others should forget the very foundation principle of all comfort, that God never forsakes the righteous nor leaves them to perish under affliction. In a passage of unrivaled sublimity he tells how it has been revealed to him that even the angels fall short of perfection; how much less should a man, who is inherently sinful, be surprised when he is called to suffer the punishment of his sin:

> Now to myself came an oracle stealthily,
> And mine ear caught the whisper thereof;
> In play of thought, from nightly visions,
> When deep sleep falls upon men,
> A shudder came upon me and a trembling
> And made all my bones to quake.
> Then a wind swept over my face,
> The hair of my body bristled up.
> There It stood, but I could not discover. . . .
> I gazed, but there was no form . . .
> Silence! And I heard a murmuring voice:
> "Can mortal man be righteous before God?
> Can man be pure before his Maker?
> Behold, in his servants he trusts not,
> And chargeth his angels with error." [2]

Perhaps some sudden gesture of denial or despair on the part of Job interrupts and irritates Eliphaz here, for he goes on to dwell on the folly of those who would protest against the dispensations of Providence. In words of proverbial

[2] 4: 12–18.

wisdom he reminds Job that trouble does not come of itself, nor by chance; and since it does come, and must be deserved, he proceeds to advise Job what he would do in his case. He would admit God's goodness and justice in these unparalleled afflictions (thus virtually confessing to extraordinary sin), in hope that thus the punishment might mercifully be remitted:

> But *I* — I would seek unto God,
> And to God would I make my appeal.[22]

"Only own up," he urges, "and then all blessings will follow; famine shall not visit you, war shall not assail you, calumny shall not afflict you, destruction shall not overwhelm you, wild beasts shall not menace you. Lo," he concludes, "we have searched this matter to its depths, and it is certainly as I have said, therefore give thou heed to it." [23]

It is the strongest witness to the marvelously high moral and spiritual character of Job that at this moment of his dark despair he did not yield to the persuasions of Eliphaz, and give way to one of the most subtle of all temptations for a sensitive conscience — to confess to sin of which conscience does not accuse one. But like Prometheus on Caucasus, with his answer to

[22] 5: 8. [23] 5: 27.

Hermes, who urged him to submit to Zeus who could afflict him more:

> I would not barter . . . .
> My suffering for thy service,

so Job yields not one jot of his claim to righteousness.

The short, intense questions with which he replies to the leisurely eloquence of his friend show the anguish of his soul over the scarcely veiled assumption of Eliphaz that he is secretly a great sinner:

> Doth the wild ass bray over the grass?
> Or loweth the ox over his fodder?
> Can it be eaten — the tasteless — unsalted?
> Or is there savor in the white of an egg? [24]

His afflictions are far too heavy, he reminds his friends, to be accounted the punishment of ordinary sins; nay, so heavy are they that now he is attacked by the awful dread that he may by their very heaviness be forced into sin.

> O that I might have my request,
> That God would grant my longing;
> Even that God would please to crush me,
> That he would loose his hand and cut me off;
> Then should this still be my comfort
> (I would leap amidst unsparing pain)
> That I have not denied the words of the Holy One.[25]

He trembles for his powers of endurance — is his strength that of stone, or of brass, that he

[24] 6: 5, 6. [25] 6:8 ff.

should come out sinless from such an ordeal? This, in the extremity of anguish, is what occupies him — the dread of sin. The intensity of this dread wrings from him a cry of remonstrance with God:

> O remember that my life is but a breath,
> That mine eye will never again see good![26]

God was his friend: he cannot believe that he will not be again, but it will be too late; "Thou shalt seek me and I shall not be here."[27] He cannot endure the thought:

> So therefore I, I will not curb my mouth,
> I will speak in the anguish of my spirit;
> I will make my plaint in the bitterness of my soul.

Those who have gone to the bottom of the dark pit of human anguish can find no stronger consolation than the knowledge that God did not impute sin to Job for his petulant cry:

> Am I a sea or a monster of the deep,
> That thou settest a watch over me?[28]

or when, calling to mind that well-known psalm in the words of which his humble soul had doubtless often delighted to express its joy in God, he exclaims in bitter irony: "What is man that thou shouldst make so much over him,"[29] trying and testing him day by day. "If I have sinned, what

[26] 7: 7.
[27] 7: 8.
[28] 7: 12.
[29] 7: 17, 20; cf. Ps. 8: 4.

is that to thee, O thou Watcher of mankind?" I so weak, so insignificant, the creature of a day?

Of course, the friends are shocked, and Bildad the Shuhite, the typical Wise Man, undertakes to set him right.[30] There is no accent of sympathy, no shade of kindly apology, in the words of proverbial wisdom which this sage utters. He makes no appeal to revelation, like his prophetic friend, Eliphaz. All the world knows that God never sends undeserved suffering: his glib description of the short-lived prosperity of the wicked may have, if Job pleases, a double meaning; he may apply it to his own case, or may consider it a ground of hope that his troubles will not last long.

> Behold God will not spurn the perfect
> Nor take evil doers by the hand;
> When he shall fill thy mouth with laughter
> And thy lips with song,
> They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame,
> And the tent of the wicked shall perish.

Job is goaded almost to desperation by Bildad's platitudes. Not because he disputes them —"of a truth I know it is thus;"[31] but because they confirm the awful dread of his soul that the Almighty acts not according to moral principles, but arbitrarily. How cope with one so inscrutable and so mighty:

[30] Chap. 8. [31] 9: 2.

Have recourse to force? He is all powerful!
To justice? before whom shall I appear?[32]

Here first appears that idea of law which is the golden clue to the meaning of this book and to its place in the great Wisdom trilogy. God is not, in Job's mind, apart from law, nor is he the strong Power that bends law to his will. He is himself the Fountain of law. As in human experience law in the last analysis is judge-made, so God is himself the court of last appeal; and the horror of Job's position is that this Supreme Court, this Fountain and Source of law, cannot be relied upon for justice:

Though I am innocent, he will declare me guilty.[33]

His consciousness of innocence asserts itself in one wild cry of despair[34]: "Innocent? *I am.* Yet I care not for life: I despise existence: what matters it, after all? For, I dare to say it, The guiltless and the guilty he destroyeth alike."

Yet he cannot quite admit that God is in fact so different from what he has long believed him to be. "If it be not he, who then is it?"[35] Can another be stronger than God? It is the blinding mystery of pain put into words for the first time in human experience. How often, how often since then, have human hearts stumbled and fallen in its darkness! But this is not sin; else

[32] 9: 19.
[33] 9: 20.
[34] 9: 21, 22.
[35] 9: 24c.

had the despairing cry on Golgotha never been uttered.

But to Job all is dark; against such a Being as now with awful misgivings he thinks he has to do, he can bring no argument. God is indeed the Judge; but he is an irresponsible Judge, making law the instrument of his capricious will, like many eastern judges of Job's acquaintance, only with this difference:

He is not a man like me, whom I might answer,
That we might come together in judgment;
There is no arbiter between us, who can lay his hand upon us both;
Who would remove his rod from me,
So that the dread of him should not unman me.[36]

A deep gulf has opened between Job and him whom he once thought his friend; his only hope is in a go-between, and he knows of none:

If I am wicked, woe unto me!
And if righteous, *yet* may I not lift up my head!
Sated with shame and seeing my misery;
For should I uplift it, thou wouldst hunt me like a lion
And show thyself mighty upon me.[37]

Daring words these: Prometheus was not more defiant; but it is his very consciousness of rectitude that breaks him down.

Oh, let him leave me, let him depart from me.
That I may breathe a little before I go hence
Never to return![38]

[36] 9: 32–34.
[37] 10: 15 f.
[38] 10: 20*b*, 21*a*.

There is no hope of immortality in this importunate entreaty, no expectation of a "world that sets this right." To him, God being what he seems to be, there is no such world; his best hope is Sheol:

The land of darkness and of the blackness of death,
A land of gloom, as the blackness of death,
Where there is no order and the shining is like midnight.[39]

Zophar, the man who always thinks *just right*, is irritated by the wild boldness of his friend's thoughts.[40] He utters with no circumlocution what the others have only hinted: Job *must* have sinned. Zophar is a good man, and he honestly seeks Job's good. One of the sublimest passages in the book is his description of the perfect wisdom of God:

Wouldst thou sound the depth of *God?*
Wouldest thou reach to the perfection of the Almighty?
Heights of heaven — what canst *thou* do?
Deeper than Sheól — what canst *thou* know?
Longer than the earth its measure,
And broader than the sea.[41]

Like the others, Zophar brings up the argument from expediency: "Direct thy heart toward God, remove iniquity from thee," [42] he says, then your troubles will be over. The wish for death which you have expressed can only be felt by the wicked.

[39] 10: 21*b*, 22.
[40] Chap. 11.
[41] 11: 7–9.
[42] 11: 13 ff.

The insinuation goads Job to satire:

> Forsooth ye are [intelligent] folk,
> With you wisdom dies out!
> But I too have understanding like you,
> My teaching is blameless, pure.[43]

And he perceives that the facts do not fit their theories:

> The careless man despises God's time of doom,
> At the appointed time his foot remains firm;
> Prosperous are the toils of the destroyer,
> And those who provoke God have security.[44]

While the just man, the man who had been God's acknowledged friend, is unjustly permitted to become a laughing-stock:

> He who called on God *and he answered him,*
> The just, the innocent — a laughing-stock![45]

All that his friends have to say is taught in nature and in human history, as well as in their philosophy. But where in the logic of events is there room for his experience? And yet how can he believe the witness of his own experience? How can God be other than just, if only he knows all the facts?

> But I — to the Almighty would I speak.
> I long to make my plea unto God.[46]

His soul revolts from the untruths which lie concealed at the bottom of his friend's pious rea-

[43] 12: 2, 3, Cheyne's translation.
[44] 12: 5, 6, Cheyne.
[45] 12: 4.
[46] 13: 3.

sonings. "Will you say that which is not right for *God?* Will you utter falsehood in his behalf?" Not even to justify God will Job so stain his soul. He does not understand him. God must be altogether other than that which Job supposed, but he will speak the truth, come what may. Job challenges God to convict him of sin:

> Come what may, I will take my flesh in my teeth
> And will put my life in my hand;
> Lo, *he may slay me* — I have ceased to hope!
> *Still* let me defend my ways to his face.[47]

"There is no worse to such a woe as mine," exclaims Heracles when his friend Nessus warns him that blasphemy may bring a worse woe upon him.

Job challenges God to convict him of sin; he could acquit himself but for these terrors which cow his courage, but change not aught of verity:

> Only do thou two things unto me
> And I will not hide myself from thy face,
> Withhold thine hand from me
> And let not thy terror unman me,
> Then do thou accuse and I will answer;
> Or let *me* speak and do *thou* respond.[48]

But no answer comes, and Job sinks into despair; nothing is certain but "the sad finality of death":

[47] 13: 14 f. [48] 13: 20 ff.

Man, born of woman,
Scant of days and full of unrest,
Cometh up like a flower and withereth,
Fleeth like the shadow and abideth not.[49]

Yet even with the thought of death comes a gleam of hope:

Oh, if the man once dead could live again!
All the days of my service [in the grave] would I wait
[like the sentinel on duty]
Till my relief came.
[*Then*] thou wouldst call and I would answer thee,
Thou wouldst yearn toward the work of thine hands.[50]

But no:

Thou *imaginest* sins with which to charge me;
So thou destroyest the hope of man.[51]

Thus the second act closes. It leaves Job in hopeless darkness, for his theology, which is that of his friends, has brought him no light, and he knows nothing of what we know from the prologue. Yet in the depth of Job's despair he has not "taken farewell of God." Though he has broken out in passionate exclamations against him, his heart still turns to God as a flower to the sunlight. This God, against whom he has been so vehemently, almost blasphemously, crying, is indeed no real God. To the true God, the Absolute Good, he clings with the hold of very desperation.

[49] 14: 1 ff. [50] 14: 14 ff. [51] 14: 16, 17.

VI

Again in the third act [52] the friends rebuke Job no longer with any attempt at gentleness. Stupidly mistaking his impassioned assertions of innocence for a claim of perfection, Eliphaz [53] accuses him of undermining the cardinal truth that the government of the world is just and right. In reply, Job turns from these "miserable comforters" to the justice of the Judge of the whole earth. Truth must prove itself before him who, with all his doubts, Job feels in his innermost heart, is true. So he appeals from the God he thought he knew to the God who is. He cannot but believe that somehow righteousness will assert itself, that

> The righteous shall hold on his way
> And the clean of hands shall wax stronger and stronger.[54]

"At last, far off," things will come right, but not for him:

> My days are past,
> My plans are broken off —
> The treasures of my heart.[55]

Bildad's taunts [56] are very bitter, but Job in his reply refuses to account to his comforters for his conduct. The unutterable woe of his soul is that

[52] Chaps. 15–21.
[53] Chap. 15.
[54] 17: 9.
[55] 17: 11.
[56] Chap. 18

God, the Judge of the whole earth, is not treating him justly:

Behold I cry out "Violence!" and am not heard;
I shriek for help, but there is no justice,
He hath fenced up my way and I cannot pass,
And over my path he hath set darkness.
He hath stripped me of mine honor
And taken the crown from my head.[57]

Yet is this possible? Does this sorrow come from God? He cannot bring himself to believe anything so contrary to all that he has hitherto experienced. It cannot be that God is his persecutor; nay, rather he will be his avenger:

For I know that my Avenger *is alive*,
And that last of all he will rise upon the earth,
When my skin has been destroyed he will rise up,
When I have no longer any flesh I shall see God;
I shall see him and *he will be on my side*.[58]

The unimpeachable witness of his own soul rises triumphant above all the witness of facts: God is not his enemy. There is a union between God and his soul which no facts can break; it will be manifest some day:

My soul within me faints with longing for *this*.[59]

It is not the resurrection which Job here anticipates. He has here brought to light a truth even more glorious — a truth of which the resurrection is one illustration: that those who are

[57] 19: 7 ff. [58] 19: 25 f. [59] 19: 27c.

bound to God by truth and love cannot, in the nature of things, be separated from him.

Zophar [60] could not understand such high thoughts, and his biting sarcasm and jeering contempt had the natural effect; they dragged Job down from the serene height of truth which with infinite suffering he had gained, and plunged him once again into the abyss of doubt. Now he openly questions the righteousness of God's government of the world.[61] He rules; of that there can be no doubt; but does he rule justly? An unjust God is no true God. Job abhors the wicked: does God?

> One dieth in his full strength
> Wholly at ease and tranquil,
> His loins are full of fat
> And his bones are moist with marrow;
> And another dieth with bitter soul,
> And hath never tasted good;
> Yet alike they lie down in the dust
> And the worms cover them both.[62]

In a long passage of unequaled vigor and pathos Job shows with how little justice retribution is meted out in this world. He challenges Bildad to maintain the truth of his assertions:

> How oft is it that the lamp of the wicked is put out? [63]

[60] Chap. 20.
[61] 21: 7 ff.
[62] 21: 23 ff.
[63] 21: 17 ff; cf. 18: 5 ff.

The third act ends with the cruel doubt to resolve which Job was suffering all this pain: Is God good?

Yet, though Job seems to have made no progress, he really has done so. He has had a fleeting realization of the deathless bond which binds him to God, and a clear, though transient, view of a life with him beyond the grave.

VII

In the fourth act[64] Eliphaz speaks with words of scarcely veiled contempt. He openly accuses Job of sin, and once more advises him to confess and make peace with God for the sake of the good that will come of it. This unworthy thought mars one of the most sublime passages in the book:

> Reconcile thyself with him now and be at peace.
> Thereby shall good come to thee.
> So shall the Almighty be thy precious ore
> And as silver purchased with toil.[65]

Job hardly hears Eliphaz; he is absorbed in the dark mystery which surrounds him. The impossibility of establishing his innocence to his friends' satisfaction throws him back upon that conviction of God's justice which Zophar had so ruthlessly shaken. He begins to have a true conception of universal law; it is no longer, like

[64] Chaps. 22–31. [65] 22: 21 ff.

the Heavenly Wisdom, a friendly power, outside of God, nor, like the Vanity of Kohéleth, an irresponsible power subordinate to God; dimly he sees that law resides in God, in his very function as Judge of the universe; and so he begins to long for him with a new desire, such as those righteous, prosperous friends of his have never dreamed of:

Oh, that I knew where to find him!
I would press on even to his seat [the judge's bench in court],
I would set out my case before him,
I would fill my mouth with arguments [the eastern method of self-defense].[66]

Job has no longer any doubt of that of which a little while before he had felt but the dim hope. If he could find God, he would find him just.

For a moment he had admitted the possibility of unconscious guilt, but he knew in his heart that this was not the case:

Then it would be an upright man pleading with him,
And I should be once for all acquitted by my Judge.[67]

But where to find this Judge?

If I go eastward, he is not there;
If I go to the west, I find him not.
Is he busy in the north? I cannot see him.
Is he hiding in the south? I cannot discover him.[68]

If God cannot attend to the cases of all men at once, why at least does he not go on circuit, like

[66] 23: 3. [67] 23: 7. [68] 23: 8 f.

other judges, appoint set times when the oppressed can plead their cause before him?

Why are not times reserved by the Almighty,
And why do not they who know him see his days
[of assize]?[69]

All sorts of oppressions are going on in the world, and he ought to look after them. Those in power rob the poor:

Naked, they slink away without clothes;
Hungry, they must bear the sheaves;
They tread the winevats — and thirst;
Yet God heedeth not the wrong![70]

To this Bildad[71] repeats the general truth he has before urged, that God is great, and all creatures are imperfect in his sight:

Dominion and dread are with him,
Author of Peace in his high places!
Behold even the moon, it doth not shine
And the stars are not pure — in *his* sight.
How much less that worm — a man,
And that creeping thing — the son of man!

The passage which has been added to Bildad's speech, 26: 5–14, carries on the thought of the majesty of God as the Ruler of the universe, how

[69] 24: 1 ff.

[70] Vss. 10 ff.

[71] Chaps. 25, 26: 5–14. I have adopted the view of some scholars that a slight displacement has occurred in the material of Act IV, that 26: 5–14 should be added to Bildad's speech and 27: 7 — 28: 28 should be given to Zophar, who in the present arrangement has no speech in this act.

He draweth a circle upon the face of the waters
To the bound where light touches darkness;[72]

how

By his power he agitates the sea
And he is of skill to smite its pride;
By his breath the heavens grow bright
And he woundeth the fleet serpent [the dragon that swallows the sun at night, the old sun myth].
Lo these are but *the edges* of his ways;
And how *slight a whisper* hath been heard of him.
But the *thunder of his power,* who can understand?

To all this Job answers:[73] Yes, he is great, but that is not the question. Is he good? The awful fear which is too deep to trouble his shallow friends returns upon him. He will maintain his own integrity:

I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go;
My heart shall not upbraid me so long as I live.[74]

In Zophar's third speech[75] he returns to the original contention that it is the wicked who get punished; the obvious inference being that Job belongs in this category. With a refinement of cruelty, he brings in Job's afflictions to point his moral:

This is the doom of the wicked man before God,
And this is the heritage of oppressors from the Almighty,
If his children be multiplied it is for the sword;

. . . . . .

[72] The figure that we saw in Wisdom's monologue.
[73] 26: 1–4; 27: 1–6. [74] 27: 5 f. [75] 27: 7 — 28: 28.

A whirlwind filcheth him away by night,
The east wind catcheth him up and he is gone.

According to this division of the speeches, it is Zophar who gives the well-known and very magnificent description of the search for wisdom, under the figure of mining operations.

In answer to Zophar's accusations and exceedingly glittering generalities, Job sums up all the circumstances of his case, reviewing his past and submitting all its evidence, point by point, to the justice of God:[76]

O that I were as in months of old,
As in the days when God watched over me!
When his lamp shone over my head
And by his light I walked through darkness!
As I was in my autumn days
When the favor of God was upon my tent;
When the Almighty was yet with me
And my children round about me—

. . . . . .

When I went through the city to the gate
And set up my seat [as judge] in its spacious arch;

. . . . . .

The blessing of the perishing came upon me
And I made the widow's heart sing for joy.

. . . . . .

I was eyes to the blind
And feet was I to the lame,
To the poor I was as a father,
And I searched out the cause of the stranger. [The portrait of a good judge.]

[76] 29: 2 ff.

In contrast, he recapitulates all the dishonors that have been poured out upon him; how the children mock him, and so on. But this is not his grief; it is something quite different:

> I cry *to thee* and thou answereth me not;
> I stand up, *and thou eyest* me;
> *Thou art changed* and become my cruel foe
> And dost *press me hard* with thy strong hand.[77]

Again he passes his life in review; it has been pure and honest and kindly, its motive always respect to the judgments of God. How could his friends accuse him of secret sin? O, that there were one ready to put him to a searching test:

> Oh that I had one who would hear me!
> Here is my signature [to his defense], let the Almighty answer me!
> Let my Adversary *write out* his indictment!
> I would put it on my shoulder [as kings their insignia of royalty]
> And bind it about me like a chaplet;
> I would tell him the number of my steps
> I would draw near him like a prince![78]

And with one last protestation of his innocence[79] the tortured man draws his robe over his head and is silent. "The pleas of Job are ended!"

Thus closes the fourth act, with the three friends silenced, though not convinced, and Job still in the darkness, holding fast to his integrity,

[77] 30: 20 ff. [78] 31: 35–37. [79] 31: 38–40.

and yearning with unutterable desire for that God who has so strangely shown himself to be his adversary, yet whom he cannot but trust in spite of all, since he is also his witness and knows the truth.

VIII

With the fifth act of the drama of Job [80] a new figure appears upon the scene [81] — Elihu, a youthful Aramean of great ability, who, one of a gradually growing circle of hearers, has listened respectfully to all that has been said, though with feelings of increasing displeasure. Silence having now fallen upon the assembly, he introduces himself as one perfectly competent to set all this trouble right. He begins with a long apology to the three sages for intervening where they had been put to silence, and offers himself as that representative,[82] that Day's man, or arbiter, whom Job has desired, to whom he may speak freely.

He goes on to review Job's complaints: He had said that God does not answer his cries. Elihu replies [83] that he does answer in many ways, if Job will but listen. Job has insisted that God has unjustly inflicted him, but it is impossible God should be unjust, and history proves it so. He challenges Job to refute the line of argument, and as Job makes no reply, he continues,

[80] Chap. 32 — 42: 6.
[81] 32: 2 ff.
[82] 33: 6 ff.
[83] 33: 14 ff.

addressing his remarks directly to the three sages, but indirectly to Job.[84] To suppose that God can do wrong is not only absurd, but impious.[85] Elihu again pauses for reply, but as Job makes none, he goes on to set him right in his ideas of God.[86] Job has said that righteousness does not profit a man; but this is inconceivable;[87] it must profit someone; it cannot profit God, therefore it must profit man. He goes on to deal with the problem of pain;[88] afflictions are sent either for discipline or as a warning. Next, as to the divine nature; it is incomprehensible, and Job ought to have known better than to try to understand it.[89]

His eloquence is interrupted by the approach of a wild eastern storm.[90] He becomes incoherent, rallies his courage, and as the tempest becomes more terrible he breaks off:

> The Almighty . . . . we cannot find him out;
> He is excellent in power.
> In judgment he will not afflict.[91]

The terrified acknowledgment bursts forth:

> Men do therefore fear him!

and with one last humiliated confession, this man so full of wisdom pauses in abject fright:

> He regardeth not any that are wise of heart![92]

[84] 34: 1, 2.
[85] 34: 10 ff.
[86] Chap. 35.
[87] 35: 3 ff.
[88] 36: 15 f.
[89] 36: 26 f.
[90] 36: 27 — 37: 18.
[91] 37: 23.
[92] 37: 24.

Out of this fearful whirlwind the Adversary whom Job has so passionately invoked, for whose appearance he has so intensely longed, believing, in the face of facts, that he would prove to be just if he could but be found — this Adversary, God, speaks to Job. Not, however, with a categorical reply to any one of the questions which Job, in the wild ferment and fever of his soul, had so vehemently, so importunately, asked. It is not thus that God justifies himself. Instead, he reveals himself. To know God is to have all doubts and questions satisfied, and so Job was satisfied now. Not that God revealed to him any of those higher mysteries of his moral government which had so perplexed him; he gave no proof of his goodness except the fact of his power. The keen irony in the questions of Jehovah is for agnostics of all ages.[93] "Can you spell out the mere alphabet of the material universe?" he asks Job. "How then can you expect to comprehend the deepest of all my mysteries, the mysteries of my moral methods, the mystery of pain?"

Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?
Declare if thou hast understanding . . . .
Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days began? . . . .
Have the gates of death been revealed to thee? . . . .
Where is the path to the abode of light?

[93] Chap. 38 — 40: 2.

Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance
of waters may cover thee? . . . .
Hast thou given the horse his might?
Hast thou clothed his neck with the quivering mane?
Doth the eagle soar aloft at thy command
And build his eyrie on high?

. . . . . .

Is he who contendeth with the Almighty corrected?
Let him who disputeth with God reply.

Job's question has not been answered nor his doubts met, except by the appeal to the wonders of nature, which are so far beyond the power of Job to comprehend. And yet "the unending miracle that passes before our eyes every day," "the perpetual self-justifying course of a harmonious universe," [94] does answer the question, does show that there is an immutable basis of goodness, because the harmonious universe is the witness to God. And so Job answers God:

Lo, I am insignificant. What can I reply to thee?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
Once have I spoken . . . . but I will not speak again
Twice . . . . but I will add no more.[95]

Job takes back nothing that he has said, but he cannot, after all, answer God as he had supposed he could. He sees now that God is a Being whose ways are past finding out by finite man. Yet he has not reached the point where he can rest satisfied in God without understanding him.

[94] Professor Genung, *op. cit.*, p. 185. [95] 40: 3–5.

He has not yet come to a certainty of Absolute Goodness, and certainly he must have. And so God speaks again,[96] to show Job that, even though he should perfectly reveal himself, it would be impossible for Job to comprehend him. The argument is of the same character as in the first remonstrance of God; it is an appeal from the mystery of his government of the physical universe to the impossibility that man should understand his moral rule, but now there is something more. Why should Job separate his cause from God's? The interests of God are the interests of man in a far truer sense than his own private interest can be. At last Job sees the truth: that alliance between God and his own soul, which he had dimly perceived when he expressed his conviction that he should eventually see God, has become a reality; nay more, the alliance is not only between God and man, but between God and the universe. Though he may not understand God fully, he can perceive that absolute goodness must go with absolute power — else the wreck of matter and the crash of worlds would come at once. And so he answers God in humility which is no longer despairing:

> I know that thou canst do all things,
> And that nothing is too hard for thee.

[96] 40: 6 ff.

(Thou saidst)
"Who is he that darkeneth counsel without knowledge?"
Yea, I have spoken of that which I understood not,
Of things too wonderful for me which I knew not,
(When I said)
"Hear me and I will speak
I will ask of thee and hear thou me!"
I had heard of thee with the hearing of the ear:
But now mine eye seeth thee;
Wherefore I retract, and repent
In dust and ashes.[97]

Yes, in his ignorance of God he had been bewildered; but he has found certainty at last: for God is no more a mere object of speculative faith, of traditional belief; he has become to Job a reality, and that bond of union between them which he had dimly felt has come to be the most real thing in all his experience; a bond which the strain of trial, of sorrow, of pain, only draws the closer and makes more real. Through all the buffetings of the fierce storm of his afflictions he had clung to the God whom he had dimly apprehended; and now the ineffable vision is vouchsafed him. And the vision of God brings with it a vision of himself. Till now he had known neither God nor himself; now he knows both. And without abating one jot of that claim to integrity which he had so passionately maintained, he recognizes that only by an earthly standard can human righteousness be measured.

[97] 42: 2–6.

For merit lives from man to man,
But not from man, O God, to thee.

So closes the fifth act of this drama of divine Wisdom. The epilogue makes no mention of the effect produced upon the Satan and the heavenly divan by this outcome. But we have already seen that the sufferings of Job were not for his sake alone, but for the sake of that great cloud of witnesses, those sons of God, who with intensest interest had been watching this awful drama of pain. They knew that the character of God was bound up in the outcome of his struggle in a sense of which Job did not dream.[98] In Job's trial — and we may believe in all those trials of ours in which we come off conquerors — the angels came to a new revelation of the Absolute Good.

IX

The double earthly gain which now was Job's has been called a material, not a spiritual, reward of all his struggles, but this is a mistake. God blessed Job, we are told, but we are not told that he recompensed him for his sufferings. The material prosperity which he gave him was sim-

[98] "There are cases where God inflicts suffering upon man, not because of sins which he has to expiate, nor even in order to ameliorate his moral character and prevent faults which he might commit, but in view of himself and his own honor. It is given to man to play a noble part in the universe, that of avenging the outraged honor of his Creator, and making his glory shine out in higher spheres than that of humanity."— Godet, *Etudes bibliques*, Vol. I, p. 271.

ply a token of the inestimable value which he places upon such love and trust as that of Job. That the material good was not intended simply to make up to him for what he had lost must be evident to all who have lost children. Such as may be later born are, indeed, as balm to the bleeding heart, but they are not meant to take the place of those still loved though lost.

There was yet more in the blessing which God bestowed upon the man who had spoken sincerely [99] of him. God set upon him the seal of complete victory when he gave him the opportunity to perform an act of sublime generosity toward his three friends by offering a burnt-offering for them.

The meaning of this marvelous book, we now see, is that it is possible for men to know that there is an absolute standard of right, and that that standard is God; that he, being All power and All might, so in the nature of things is All Good. Even when clouds and darkness are round about him, even though in man's hour of urgent need God appears to hide himself (and it is the bitter drop in many a cup of anguish that he often does hide himself from the hearts that he afflicts), even then, in the darkness and the agony, without one ray of the joy that shines from his presence — even then, though one may not even cling to

[99] Job 42: 8.

him, so empty is the world of his presence, it is possible to feel sure that he is and that he is good. And in that awful hour the appeal that he made to Job is also his appeal to everyone. When all else is taken from us, we cannot but know that *God reigns*. And through that knowledge, sooner or later, but surely, most surely, we shall find our way back to the certainty: *God reigns in righteousness and love.*

CHAPTER X

THE HEBREW UTOPIA

I

Since the earliest dawn of civilization every thoughtful people has had its dreams of the perfect state. In the infancy of the race men looked back to the Golden Age as something far behind them; but no sooner did men begin to think than they began to hope, and to look forward to a future which should be better than anything that ever yet had been. Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* and Plato's *Republic* were by no means the only embodiments of these fair dreams. The minds of men have always been busy with plans of an ideal state. Vergil in his fourth *Eclogue* gives a delightful picture of the last world-age, as a blissful kingdom of peace. The Stoics imagined a future community of humanity, all nations being united in one flock, ruled by the law of reason. Brahmins and Buddhists, with a truer apprehension of the case, wrestled hard with the problem of redemption; but found in the end no brighter hope for man than Nirvana. The Parsee, whose view of life was nobler, saw in it a ceaseless con-

flict between good and evil; yet no more dared look for the ultimate victory of the good than he would admit the possible triumph of the evil, and could only hold his hope in suspense. All these dreams of the future, however, were a matter of pure speculation. There were few or none to follow Plato and Sir Thomas More into the region of the concrete until our own time, when a horde of modern theorists, set thinking by Mr. Bellamy, have ventured on the same road.

Our studies have brought to light the impressive fact that the Hebrew people appear to have had an intuitive perception of certain great ideas, which, though they underlie all thought, usually come to human consciousness only as the result of long and thorough culture.

We have seen that from an early day Israel had a consciousness of the great cosmic idea, unity, and of its true basis in God. We have seen how the idea of law took possession of Kohéleth; we now find two other universal ideas emerging from the prophetic teachings: that of progress — or, in present-day language, development — in the growth of ideas; and the conviction that there is a meaning in human experience; that nothing walks with aimless feet; that all events are significant. This idea of the meaningfulness of human experience shines out from the first page of Genesis, where Adam gives names

to the creatures.[1] To the concrete-thinking Hebrew to give a name was to fix the character; and the naming of the brute creation by the first man proved him lord over this creation, "a being of free will and large responsibility," the representative of God on earth.

From the disaster of the fall a higher good was wrought, a nobler destiny was given to man: he is no longer to rule simply over the lower creation, but also in the moral realm — to trample evil under his feet. The deep significance of the narrative is that sin, suffering, death are not inherent factors in human nature, but something external, over which man is to be finally victorious. Here, then, in the protevangelium,[2] is potentially the Hebrew utopia, as the oak tree is potentially in the acorn; and it is perfectly correct to say that the entire function of prophecy was to develop the idea herein contained — the ideal of a perfect humanity forever triumphant over evil. This development was of course progressive, little by little. The prophets entered gradually into the deep significance of this early ideal, making it more and more concrete, more and more definite, and thus more and more a power in the national life.

There was a profound moral purpose in these visions of a perfect state; they were intended in

[1] Gen. 2: 19. [2] Gen. 3: 15.

a measure to bring about their own fulfilment, not in spite of man's free will, but by means of it, their very beauty and desirability being calculated to win that response and accord of man which would gradually work out among the people the ideal citizenship whose existence makes possible the perfect state. It is no doubt for this reason that the dream of the Hebrew utopia grew ever brighter in the face of disappointment, that the failure of prediction led, not to skepticism, but to a more ardent hope. The high and beautiful ideals held by the prophets of Israel embodied precisely the same ideal as the promise given to Eve — the ultimate triumph of good over evil in the person of man; and it was only by degrees that they gave up the expectation that the victor over evil would be *all Israel,* and looked for *the man* who should trample evil under his feet.

This was one ground of the striking element of Hebrew progress; a noble unrest, a divine dissatisfaction with their best ideals, had possession of this people, a consciousness that something better must be in store for them than even their noblest dreams. There is, as Matthew Arnold says, profound significance in the fact, given by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, that Abraham, not contented with the wide pasturages of the land of promise, still looked for a city — a higher type of

civilization;[3] and that the "rest" which Joshua conquered in Canaan for the wanderers of the wilderness only made them more deeply yearn for the sabbath rest still kept back for the people of God.[4] It was always so with the Hebrew utopia; each new color added to the beautiful picture only made them seek for a brighter pigment, a more golden glory to spread upon the canvas; the nobler the type of manhood achieved by them, the more they longed for a manhood noble beyond their highest dreams; and thus it became at last possible that God, having through long centuries spoken to Israel in the prophets, could in the end of the days speak to them in a Son.[5]

In order to appreciate the meaning of this, we ought to begin by observing that the word "messianic," which may be used interchangeably with "utopian" as applied to the hope of Israel, has not in the Bible the invariable significance which has been given to it since the coming of our Lord. No doubt the utopian hopes of Israel came more and more to cluster around *a person*, as Israel came more and more to realize the failure of *the nation* to attain to ideal goodness; and unquestionably the actual fulfilment of these hopes was in him whom we know as the Christ. But the Greek word "Christ" and the Hebrew word "Messiah" have no more restricted meaning than

[3] Heb. 11: 10. [4] 4: 8, 9. [5] 1: 1, 2.

the English word "anointed," which properly translates them; and in the Hebrew Bible the term "Messiah" is applied to many persons. David says that Saul is Jehovah's Messiah,[6] giving that as his reason why he refrained from killing him in the cave, and when he penetrated to his tent. Aaron was called Jehovah's Messiah, and in Leviticus[7] the same word refers to any future high-priest. Even Cyrus, who released exiled Israel from captivity and sent them back to their land, is Jehovah's Messiah.[8] In other words, the messianic idea was a development, like the other ideals of a perfect state.

We see this development most clearly in tracing the application of the title "Servant of Jehovah," which is used in the Old Testament more frequently than the word "Messiah," and with the same import. It becomes very evident, as we study prophecy, that this title was originally applied to the Jewish state, whose members in a collective capacity were expected to realize ideal perfection, and thus serve Jehovah's purpose as ministers of salvation to others. By degrees the ideal grew so high that it could not possibly be applied to the whole community: its application became limited to *the remnant,* the truly God-fearing and obedient few, to whom Isaiah looks as the only hope of Israel — the only portion of

[6] 1 Sam. 24: 6. [7] Lev. 4: 3. [8] Isa. 45: 1.

the community in which God's promises can be made good. It is the remnant who are called the Servant of Jehovah in some chapters of Isaiah and elsewhere. At last the ideal had become so transcendentally glorious that only a divine-human Messiah could fulfil it and make it a reality.

For example, when Moses foretells the advent of the prophet whom God would raise up like unto himself,[9] his prophecy is no doubt capable of being explained to refer to our Lord Jesus Christ; but the entire context shows what our knowledge of the small degree of spiritual development of Israel at that time would lead us to expect, that the most the people could at that time understand, or anticipate, was that, just as Moses had brought the first clear revelation of the divine will in the form of law, so in the Golden Age one would be raised up who would be the mediator of a still greater divine enlightenment, a more complete revelation of the will of God.

Divine enlightenment was from first to last the central fact of the Hebrew utopia. Isaiah gave the watchword of the perfect state when he cried: "O ye house of Israel, come ye, and let us walk in the light of Jehovah!"[10] This, as Matthew Arnold says, sums up the whole ideal in one word: to walk in the light of Jehovah is to have the possibility of perfection.

[9] Deut. 18: 15. [10] Isa. 2: 5.

But much of what we call prophecy has no reference to the Messiah in any capacity. It is the kingdom of God which is in question, that to which the name "the Hebrew Utopia" has been given, an ideal of the perfect state whose supreme ruler is God.

II

This kingdom of God was to be, not in heaven, but on earth. The children of Israel understood the seat of their utopia to be Palestine. The land was as important a part of the promise to Abraham as the people. The hope of possession of the Promised Land inspires the whole patriarchal history, and is the center of the Mosaic dispensation as well as of the long struggles under the judges and early kings. The possession of the land was no doubt only a means to an end. The purpose for which Abraham and his descendants were separated from other nations was that Israel might be a blessing to the world; but the possession of the land seemed a necessary means to this end. The utopian ideal was of "the holy nation in possession of the Holy Land," and the land was an essential factor in the ideal.

It was for this reason that Israel, being unfaithful, lost the land; the very meaning of their national existence required this. An unfaithful people in the land of promise and blessing would be an outrage to the moral sense; and of all the

words addressed to the exiled people none are brighter, more inspiring, than those which describe the restoration of the land to its part in the purpose of blessing:[11] "I am returned to Zion. I dwell in the midst of Jerusalem." So that Jerusalem shall be called "a city of fidelity," and the mountain of Jehovah Sabaoth, "the holy mountain." The summing up of Joel's glorious prophecy is that "Jehovah dwells in Zion."[12] The name of Ezekiel's new Jerusalem was "Here is God."[13] It is very significant that the prophecy which for generations was believed to be the earliest written book of prophecy — that of Jonah — should have for its central thought the earliest ideal of the Hebrew people, the promise to Abraham that all nations of the earth should be blessed in his seed. The book of Jonah stands apart from all literature of the early time; yet it is in the line of God's avowed purpose, showing that he has as complete a care for heathen peoples as for his own chosen nation. The closing verse of that prophecy is the final sentiment of all prophecy: "Should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between

[11] Zech. 8: 3.
[12] Joel 3: 21.
[13] Ezek. 48: 35, the last words of the book.

their right hand and their left hand: and also much cattle?" [14]

III

This, then, is the corner-stone of the Hebrew utopia — Israel a blessing to the world because Israel knows God. Amos, the prophet who first wrote of God's mercy, bases his dreams of the utopia quite as much upon his justice — that "judgment" so dear to the devout Hebrew soul. It was religiously a very bad time when Amos prophesied — the days of the second Jeroboam, when, as we learned not long ago, great external prosperity had corrupted the nation. That moral necessity of exile from the land, already touched upon, had become evident to the prophet's mind as absolutely essential to bringing about the right conditions for that utopia, the hope of which, as we have seen, grew ever brighter in disappointment. Israel must be sifted among the nations; not for loss, but salvation.

> For lo, I am going to give charge
> And sift the house of Israel among all nations
> As grain is sifted in a sieve;
> And not a grain falls to the ground.[15]

The early chapters of the prophecy of Amos show the wide dominion of God by picturing the

[14] Jon. 4: 11.

[15] Am. 9: 9. I have borrowed in this study Professor Briggs's translations in *Messianic Prophecy* and those of the Rev. Buchanan Blake in *How to Read the Prophets*.

neighboring nations as subject to that "judgment" of God which was to Israel such a ground of hope. Then follow a series of warnings and a series of visions, and finally (after the promise of sifting) comes a glorious picture of the Golden Age:

"In that day I will raise up the fallen hut of David,
And wall up its breaches, and raise up its ruins,
And build it as in days of old;
In order that they may seek Jehovah,
The remnant of Edom, and all nations
Upon whom my name is called;"
Is the utterance of Jehovah, doer of this.

"Lo, days are coming," is the utterance of Jehovah,
"When the ploughman will overtake the reaper,
And the treader of grapes, the sower of seed;
And the mountains will drip with new wine [fertility],
And all the hills will melt.

"And I will restore the prosperity of my people Israel,
And they will build waste cities, and inhabit them;
And plant vineyards, and drink their wine;
And make gardens, and eat their fruit;
And I will plant them upon their land,
And they shall not again be thrust out from their land
Which I have given them;"
Jehovah thy God doth say.[16]

Here the Promised Land is the abiding habitation of God's people; the heathen will seek the Lord there; and nature will respond to the joy of man, the mountains dropping sweet wine and the hills melting with gladness.

[16] Am. 9: 11–15; Briggs.

We can imagine what would be the central element in Hosea's utopian dream — the return of wayward Israel to obedience and love. All creation will have its part in the joy of such a reformation.[17] Till that time it will be travailing and groaning in pain; but then it will find its redemption in the redemption of the people of God. Even to this day this glorious thought — the redemption of nature — has found no place in the most perfect utopias outside of the Bible, and we have not yet begun to appreciate its profound significance.

The earnest expectation of the creature (all created things) waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not of its own will, but by reason of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.[18]

What did Paul mean in this passage? What did the prophets mean when they described in such glowing colors this truce of nature?

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,
And the leopard lie down with the kid,
And the calf and young lion and fatling together,
And a little child be leader over them.
And the cow and bear shall graze:
Together will their young lie down,
And the lion like the ox will eat straw:
And a suckling shall play over the hole of the asp,

[17] Hos., chap. 14. [18] Rom. 8: 19–21.

And over the light hole of the great viper
The weaned child will have stretched out his hand.
And they will not harm or destroy in all my holy mountain.
For the earth will have been filled with knowing Jehovah,
As the waters are covering the sea.[19]

The visions of Isaiah with regard to the Golden Age are especially magnificent. In general, Isaiah, who was just such a statesman and patriot as Elisha, though under far different circumstances, finds the Golden Age in the reign of an anointed king and the willing subjection of the people of God. Labor is hallowed; there shall be no weak hands; there shall be no feeble knees; nor shall there be deaf ears or blurred eyes; divine things will be immediately apprehended.[20] Not that God will be nearer to his people than he always has been, but that, like Elisha's servant,[21] men's eyes will be opened, and they shall see that which though invisible is always near. In that rhapsody of judgment and salvation, the section of Isaiah's prophecy which includes chaps. 24–27, the important part played by the land is brought out.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah shall beat out his corn, from the flood of the river (Euphrates) unto the brook of Egypt, and ye shall be garnered, one by one, O ye children of Israel.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great trumpet shall be blown; and they shall come which were

[19] Isa. 11: 6–9. [20] Isa., chap. 35. [21] 2 Kings 6: 17.

ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and they that were outcasts shall worship Jehovah in the holy mountain of Jerusalem.[22]

No doubt, in the prophet's view, the utopia would immediately begin when the exile of Israel was ended. The times and seasons were not known to God's spokesman at that time any more than they were to the apostles or even to the Son of God himself. Jeremiah had the same idea:

Again will they say this thing in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I restore their prosperity:
"May Jehovah bless thee, habitation of righteousness, mountain of holiness,
And let Judah and all his cities dwell together therein, the husbandmen and those who tent about with their flocks." [23]

Isaiah in the second chapter (which is the true beginning of his prophecy, chap. 1 being an introduction) takes for his text an ancient oracle telling of the part the heathen will have in the future utopia:

But in the latter day it shall come to pass that
The mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established, at the head of mountains.
It shall be exalted above the hills: yea, peoples shall flow unto it.
And many nations shall come, and say, "Come, let us go up
To the mountain of Jehovah, and to the house of the God of Jacob,

[22] Isa. 27: 12, 13. [23] Jer. 31: 23, 24.

For he will teach us his ways and we will walk in his paths."
For teaching shall go forth from Zion — the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem.

This picture is very striking by reason of its bold figures. The temple mount is to be miraculously drawn upward till it is exalted over the tops of all the mountains, visible to the whole world; and the beautiful picture is given of the people of all nations streaming upward to it from every direction, like waters reversing their usual course by an irresistible attraction. We shall find in Ezekiel a companion figure of blessings flowing down from Jerusalem upon the peoples. Then will be realized the promise to Abraham, all nations blessed in his seed.

Isaiah, as a study of his book makes clear, was the first to be so impressed by this ancient oracle, which he and also Micah took for the text of their prophecies, as actually to apply it to all the peoples of the world. Amos had seen that the neighboring people were concerned with Israel in God's judgments; but Isaiah is the first writer in any nation who conceived of the history of the world as a whole. But after Isaiah this thought was dear to the prophets of Israel; Jeremiah[24] tells how the nations "shall come and sing in the light of Zion and flow unto the goodness

[24] 31: 11, 12.

of Jehovah. And their soul shall become as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow any more."

IV

Another feature of the Hebrew utopia is *peace*. Isaiah leads the prophetic chorus in declaring that war shall be no more:

And he will judge [arbitrate] between the nations,
And admonish many peoples;
And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
And they shall not learn war any more.[25]

We can grasp the large significance of Isaiah's prophecy of peace (based, it will be noticed, upon arbitration, the precise meaning of "judge between") as a witness to the development of the utopian ideal, only when we realize that in the early days war was the business of nations, and that it even yet appears to be their chief business. Perhaps the very first step toward the realization of Isaiah's glorious vision of universal peace was taken when the international arbitration convention was founded at The Hague. For the Anointed King for whose birth Isaiah was eagerly looking would be not only Wonderful-Counselor, Hero-God, Father-Everlasting, but Prince of Peace. At his coming "all the armies

[25] Isa. 2: 4 ff.

of the armed men in the tumult and the garments rolled in blood [all that speaks of war] shall be even for fire and for fuel of fire" (no more needed).[26] Under the rule of such a prince shall this song be sung in the land of Judah:

Ours is a strong city! For walls and outworks is salvation appointed.
Open ye the gates [defenses no longer needed]. Let a righteous nation that keepeth faith enter in:
A purpose firmly fixed thou dost keep — *Peace;*
Perfect peace to those whose trust is in thee.[27]

Then they can say to the nations:

Look upon Zion [Jerusalem] — the city of our feasts! Thine eyes shall see
A *peaceful* habitation — an abiding tabernacle [not needing to be removed for fear of the enemy];
Her stakes shall never be removed, nor her cords broken.
Jehovah shall there be our glory. In the place of broad rivers and streams
No oared [war] galley shall go — no gallant ship [of war] shall pass;
Jehovah is our judge: Jehovah is our law-giver;[28]
Jehovah is our king. He will save us.[29]

It is no doubt in the enthusiasm of this new idea of peace that the forty-sixth psalm was written:

[26] 9: 5, 6.
[27] 26: 1–3.
[28] 33: 20–22.
[29] The force of this exultation can best be appreciated when it is remembered that Chaldea — that "place of broad rivers and streams" — had about this period instituted her navy.

There is a river — its streams make glad the city of God,
The holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High.
God is in her midst, she shall not be moved.
God hath helped her even in the morning dawn.
The nations raged. The kingdoms were moved.
He uttereth his voice, the earth melted!
Jehovah of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob our refuge sure.

Come, behold the works of Jehovah — what desolation in the earth he makes.
He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.
He breaketh the bow: he cutteth the spear in sunder.
He burneth the chariots in fire.
"Be still (he says) and know that I am God, high among the nations, high in the earth."
Jehovah of Hosts is with us: the God of Jacob our refuge sure.

Micah, Isaiah's contemporary, dwells with delight on this new dream of peace.[30] The ruler who is to come

. . . . shall stand and feed in the strength of Jehovah
In the majesty of the name of Jehovah his God;
And they shall abide: for now shall he be great to the ends of the earth,
Yea, this one shall be peace.

Micah lived in a very wicked time, but he saw a great truth. Part of his fourth chapter, which is sung in the Sistine Chapel every Good Friday to music by Palestrina, is a word of forgiveness, and all through his prophecy it is the thought of forgiveness which lends cogency to his vigorous

[30] Mic. 5: 4, 5a.

efforts for a present reformation as well as to his dream of the future perfect state:

In that day, saith Jehovah, I will assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted. Yea, I will make her that halteth a remnant, and her that was cast off a strong nation, and the Lord himself shall reign over them in Mount Zion[31] from henceforth, even forever. And thou, O tower of the flock, thou stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall the former kingdom come back: the kingdom shall come back to the daughter of Jerusalem.[32]

Micah also sees *peace* as a feature of the perfect state:

Yea, he shall judge [arbitrate] among many peoples, and rebuke strong nations afar off;
And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruning hooks.
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation: war they learn no more.
But they shall sit every man under his vine and his fig tree;
None shall make them afraid.
The mouth of Jehovah of Hosts hath spoken.[33]

Nahum adds nothing to the picture of the perfect state, his prophecy being entirely against Nineveh, with a few words of encouragement to Judah. "The Lord is good. He's a stronghold in the day of trouble. Yea, he knoweth them that

[31] It should be borne in mind that "Zion" in the prophetic writings is seldom if ever a metaphor for the church; it means simply "Jerusalem," where God was expected personally to reign.

[32] 4: 6–8.

[33] Mic. 4: 3, 4.

trust in him." [34] But Zephaniah, who lived in that dark period just before Josiah's reformation, and whose words are chiefly of warning, yet looks forward [35] to the time when the city shall be full of holy joy because its sins are canceled and "the king of Israel, even Jehovah, is in its midst," making Israel "a name and a praise among all peoples of the earth."

During this period Habbakuk prophesied and was troubled, as we remember, because God's people were spoiled by the wicked Assyrians. His prophecy is among the most sublime poetry of the Old Testament, but it adds nothing definite to the hope of a perfect state.

Jeremiah prophesied in a dreadful time — the period leading up to the fall of Jerusalem; and most of his utterances are of warning and sorrow, tears for the slain of the daughter of his people. Yet some of the most beautiful ideals of the perfect state are his. He sees Israel as a docile flock, tended by the good shepherd:

He that gathered Israel will garner him. He will keep him
As a shepherd doth his flock.
And they shall come and sing upon Mount Zion:
They shall flow to the good things of Jehovah, to the wheat and wine,
To the oil, and to the young of the flock and the herd.

[34] Nah. 1:7. [35] Zeph. 3:15, 20.

Their soul shall be as a watered garden. They shall
languish no more.
Then shall the virgins rejoice in the dance, young men
and old together.
For I turn their mourning into joy, and comfort them,
I will make them rejoice after their sorrow.
Yea, my people shall be satisfied with my good things,
saith Jehovah.[36]

The new covenant is a guarantee that this is only the beginning of a period of endless obedience and joy:

And they shall be to me a people, and I will be their
God.
Yea, I will give them one heart, and one way evermore
to fear me,
That it may be well with them, and their children after
them.
I will make an everlasting covenant with them;
I will not turn away from them, that they may not depart
from me.
I will rejoice over them to do good. Yea, I will in truth
plant them
In this land, with my whole heart, and my whole soul.[37]

Jerusalem shall be a habitation of justice, a mount of holiness, its name shall be "Jehovah is our Righteousness," [38] and every weary soul and every fainting soul shall be satisfied.[39]

Zechariah, too, sees the shepherd character of the Messiah. "He feeds the flock exposed to slaughter, even you, O poor ones of the flock;" [40]

[36] Jer. 31: 10–14. [38] 23: 6. [40] Zech. 11: 7.
[37] 32: 38–41. [39] 31: 23, 25.

and guides them with his two staves, Delight, or graciousness, and Union (bands) thus typifying the union of Israel and Judah — now far apart.

Zechariah dwells with delight on the peaceful character of the Messianic King:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion. Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem.
Behold, thy king cometh to thee, just and victorious.
Lowly, even riding upon an ass — upon a colt, an ass's foal.
I am cutting off the chariot [of war] from Ephraim, the horse [used only in war] from Jerusalem.
The battle shall be broken. He shall speak peace to the nations.
His dominion —'tis from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth.[41]

This prophet gives a vigorous description of the blessedness of the people under the Shepherd's rule:

Yea, Jehovah their God shall save them, in that day — the flock of his pasture.
For they shall be as jewels of a crown — as a standard glittering over the land.
Oh, how great shall be their happiness! How great their splendor!
Corn shall make their young men glad; new wine their maids.[42]

But the crowning joy of the Hebrew utopia is the actual presence of God; Jeremiah had seen that the name of Jerusalem would be "Jehovah

[41] Zech. 9: 9, 10. [42] 9: 16, 17.

is our Righteousness "— Ezekiel saw that it was "Jehovah is here," ever-present. So Zechariah:

Thus saith Jehovah: "I have returned to Zion, I will
dwell in the midst of Jerusalem,
And Jerusalem shall be called the city of fidelity; and
the mountain of Jehovah Sabaoth the holy moun-
tain."

Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth:
"Again old men and old women will dwell in the streets
of Jerusalem,
Each with his staff in his hand because of great age;
And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and
girls playing in the streets thereof."

Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth:
"Lo, I am about to save my people from the land of the
sunrise and from the land of the sunset,
And bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of
Jerusalem, and become my people,
And I will become their God in faithfulness and in right-
eousness." [43]

Then shall be fulfilled the promise of blessing to the world:

Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth:
"Yet it will be that peoples and inhabitants of great
cities will come.
And the inhabitants of the one will go unto another,
saying,
'Let us go on to court the face of Jehovah,
And seek the face of Jehovah Sabaoth.' 'Let me go also.'
And many peoples and strong nations will come
To seek Jehovah Sabaoth in Jerusalem, and to court the
face of Jehovah."

Thus saith Jehovah Sabaoth:
"In those days, when ten men of all tongues of the

[43] 8: 3–8.

nations shall lay hold, they will lay hold of a Jewish man, saying,
'Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.'" [44]

But Ezekiel, in his visions by the river Chebar, saw the glorious future as none of his predecessors had done. In his far exile from the sacred home of his fathers, he delighted himself with constructing a plan of the New Jerusalem, down to its minutest details. The new name of the city, as we have seen, should be "Here is God." [45] Like Zephaniah he saw the character of the rule to be that of a shepherd, but the shepherd is not Jehovah himself, but his Anointed, the Messiah:

And I will set up one Shepherd over them, and he shall feed them,
My servant David, he shall feed them.
. . . . . .
I, Jehovah, have spoken.
I will make with them a covenant of peace;
I will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land;
And they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods [because the wild beasts will be tame].
Yea, I will set them round my hill,
And I will cause the rain to come down in its season.
There shall be showers causing blessing:
The tree of the field shall yield its fruit; the earth her increase.
And they shall be safe in the land, and know that I am Jehovah.[46]

[44] 8: 20–23. [45] Ezek. 48: 35. [46] 34: 23–27a.

Like Isaiah, we see that Ezekiel looked for a metamorphosis of the natural world, whenever the hearts of God's people should be in harmony with his will. Ezekiel belonged to the priesthood, and his utopian dream was not that of a kingdom, but of a thoroughly organized ecclesiastical state. We remember how in the last nine chapters of his book he gives a detailed account of his idea of the perfect restoration of God's house, and of the never-ceasing service that should go on therein, and the river of life issuing from the temple to water the whole world.

Joel sees the same river of life as one of the blessed features of the kingdom of God. "A fountain will issue from the house of Jehovah and water the acacia vale" [47] in the land of Moab, crossing the Jordan to extend its life-giving influence to the nations. This is the river the writer of Revelation saw. Like Zephaniah and Ezekiel, Joel saw the chief blessedness of the new Jerusalem to be that "Jehovah is a dweller in Zion." [48]

But Joel makes a glorious addition to the fair utopian vision: That aspiration breathed by Moses, with no hope of its literal fulfilment — "would God that all Jehovah's people were prophets; that Jehovah would put his Spirit upon them" — is to be granted in the perfect state, as

[47] Joel 3: 18*c*. [48] 3: 21*b*.

Joel foresees it. Everyone shall be filled with the Spirit:

I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy;
Your old men shall dream dreams — your young men shall see visions;
Yea, also upon the men-servants and handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.[49]

Obadiah gives the highest ideal of humanity: "Upon Mount Zion shall be a remnant, *and it shall be holiness;*" [50] and reaches the final goal of prophecy — "Jehovah's shall be the kingdom." And a choir of psalmists in the days of Israel's restoration break out into the same triumphant song. In a group of psalms, the ninety-third to the one hundredth, this is the central thought:

Jehovah doth reign. he is clothed with majesty.
Jehovah is magnificent.[51]

And again:

Say among the nations that Jehovah doth reign.[52]

And still again:

Jehovah doth reign, let the earth exult,
Let the many coasts be glad.

Jehovah doth reign, let the peoples tremble.[53]

and:

Know that Jehovah, he is God,
He made us, and we are his.[54]

[49] 2: 28, 29. [50] Ob., vss. 17*a*, 21*b*. [51] Ps. 93: 1. [52] Ps. 96: 10. [53] Pss. 97: 1; 99: 1. [54] Ps. 100: 3.

Thus we see all dreams of the perfect state gathering around and culminating in the thought of the literal, personal reign of God over a renewed and purified earth — this world of ours — inhabited by men realizing God's first ideal — a people all holiness, endowed with his Spirit, final victors over evil. The ninety-first psalm gives the glorious picture of this ideal.

Nothing can be fairer, more satisfying, than this ideal, and if it had been possible for mankind to realize it, the world would have been the Hebrew utopia ages ago. One prophet alone — perhaps two — saw the impossibility that this glorious dream should become reality until a divine model had been given to man, one who did perfectly realize the ideal. Malachi perhaps indicated this in his promise[55] that the "Sun of Righteousness should arise with healing in his wings;" and the last chapters of Isaiah[56] make the whole thing clear — that the redemption of Zion can only be through one suffering and perfectly obedient Servant of God. A study of this greatest of prophecies makes no change in this view of the Hebrew utopia; but it does give a sure ground of expectation that this glorious picture, whose outlines we have now seen, will one day become a reality. And more than this, the last chapters of Isaiah show that the perfect state

[55] Mal. 4: 2. [56] Isa., chaps. 40–66.

will not be the final consummation of all things, but the true beginning; that the utopia dreamed of by Hebrew prophets will be, as has been lately said, " not earth's closing epoch, but earth's glorified form," when the true normal state of things shall come to exist and " Eden (that blessed place where God walks and talks with men) will be restored."

CHAPTER XI

THE LAW AND MODERN SOCIETY

I

The abiding impression made by a study of that body of laws and institutions which we call Mosaic must be one of surprise. At whatever period given, whether at various times during the forty years' wandering, or also at other critical times in the national life, it was given to a people by no means the most civilized, thoughtful, and highly educated of their time, a people in many respects immature. On general principles, it might be expected that long before our own day it would be antiquated and ready to vanish away, like the Ten Tables of Solon and the Code of Hammurabi.[1] Most of us perhaps think that it has vanished away, having been superseded when our Lord came. On the contrary, a careful study of the Mosaic legislation shows that it is a mar-

[1] The Code of Hammurabi was discovered and published long after this chapter was written. I have thoroughly revised it, however, with reference to that code (which is far older than Abraham and must have been known to him), not only because its influence upon the Mosaic institutions is clearly traceable, but also because a comparison of the two brings into striking relief the marvelously high ethical standard of the latter. In comparing the two I have used Professor R. F. Harper's edition.

velously universal body of laws, with important elements of permanent value for the ordering of human relations. In certain respects it appears perfectly adapted to, and designed to bring about, a higher social state than the world has yet seen, having latent in itself much of the best legislation of the present time as well as the glorious features of that Golden Age, that perfect state, which the prophets so marvelously pictured.

Even a mere outline study of this Torah suggests the thought that when our Lord said that he came to fulfil this law, he meant something which the world has yet to learn and be the better for. Surely it can hardly be possible that in the words, "I came not to destroy the law but to fulfil it," he could have meant us to understand that he proposed to abrogate the law. Certainly he did not, so far as the Ten Commandments are concerned. We call the Ten Commandments *the* moral law, and say that of course that stands while all the rest has been done away with. But a little study will serve to show that all the laws given by God to the children of Israel were moral laws. Some of these laws concern the individual, some the family, some the nation; some concern the civil life, some the religious; some are ceremonial, some civil, some juristic; and all of them appear to stand on precisely the same plane of obligation. Laws of ceremonial and laws of so-

cial life are interspersed among one another in the same chapter. There is not the slightest hint that one is of less ethical importance than another.

This is not to say that law is not susceptible of development; that the will of God might not be progressively revealed. The very name by which the children of Israel called their law — Torah, or "instruction"— shows that it has this property, just as a parent's instruction of his children goes through a process of development with the child's advancing years and enlarging moral capacity. It is a familiar fact that many of the laws given in Exodus are repeated with important modifications in Deuteronomy, and a careful study of the whole Torah shows a number of longer and shorter codes which appear to have been given at different times, and in which are found occasional modifications of certain laws previously given. One of the laws of household service, as will presently be seen, was so modified. The forty years of the wilderness journey gave time for something of this kind; and it is a matter of no consequence to our present study whether or not those scholars are right who think that this process of developing the Torah, this education of the Jews in human and divine relations,

continued for a very much longer period, even into times after the exile.[2]

Although we cannot conceive of any of God's laws being founded on anything but immutable ethical principles, yet we can conceive of them as being so adapted to conditions as to be, not so much a final statement of man's obligation, as a preparation for such a statement, a shadow of good things to come. Of this character are the laws that we call ceremonial, most mistakenly using the word as an antithesis to moral. The ceremonial laws are profoundly ethical and were of temporary obligation, not because they were not ethical, but because they were adapted to con-

[2] Scholars are now practically agreed that the laws found in general in Ex., chaps. 20–34, represent such a growth as everywhere takes place among a semi-civilized people, when the decisions of judges, chieftains, kings, and priests pass into custom and become law. Ex. 18: 13–27 indicates something of this; and these earliest laws are designed chiefly for the guidance of such judges. They are attributed to the period from Moses to about 800 B. C., or about the end of the reign of Joash. The deuteronomic code, which, whenever written, was presented to the people and ratified by them in the reign of Josiah (*ca.* 623 B. C.; 2 Kings 23: 3), was intended for the guidance, not of the judges, but of the whole people. The Holiness Code (Lev., chap. 17–26) probably comes next, and appears to be a collection of laws of which some are as early as Moses, and most were enacted during the existence of the first temple, but which were codified about the time of Ezekiel. The remainder of Leviticus and the laws found in Numbers appear to belong to the Priestly Code, brought from Babylon by Ezra, but with many subsequent revisions and additions. The Ten Commandments, in their existing form (Ex. 20: 1–17), are supposed to be a priestly revision of the "Ten Words" of the earliest code, which are believed to have been brief commands, like the present form of the sixth, seventh, and eighth commandments. Nevertheless, as inspired leader, prophet, and judge Moses was, as Professor Kent says, in a very real sense the father of Israel's institutions and laws.

ditions. They were intended, not to be simply swept away at last as if they had not been, but to expand into a more intelligent and beautiful ceremonial.

We have only to compare the ceremonial laws of the Torah with the religious rites of the most enlightened peoples that lived near Canaan, Phœnicia, Egypt, Syria, Moab, to see that the ceremonial laws of the Hebrews were an enormous ethical advance on the ceremonial laws of other nations, a marvelous advance beyond anything Israel had ever seen or practiced before. At the time when they were given, and for generations after, the ceremonial laws may well have been far more important to Israel, for ethical training as well as for spiritual uplift, than the laws we now distinguish as moral. It was not their typical significance which made them important to the Jews, however important it may make them to us. To them it was their deeply moral import that made the ceremonial laws so valuable. But in the nature of things, ceremonial is subject to change, for it cannot but be adapted, not only to advancing moral character, but to varying conditions. The exiled Jews were unable to keep the ceremonial laws in Babylon, and yet it was the memory of their ceremonial observances that kept alive during this period the conviction that they were the children of God.

The importance of these ceremonial laws being, therefore, so much more fundamental than is commonly supposed, so intimately related to that development which fitted the Jewish nation to be the matrix of Christianity, it is with reluctance that I leave this important part of the Torah in this place, without even a glance at its particulars.

II

It will be remembered that, when one of the New England colonies was first settled, it was agreed that "in the absence of special laws the rules of the Word of God [in the Torah] were to be followed;" and that another New England colony in its articles of organization laid down the fundamental principle that the community would be ordered in civil as well as ecclesiastical affairs by scriptural (that is, Mosaic) rules. Perhaps these resolutions were due much less than is generally supposed to the fact that these colonists were Bible-loving Puritans, and far more than is supposed to the fact that they were astute and far-seeing legislators, better aware than most people have ever been of the admirable practicability of the Mosaic laws and their fine adaptability to a very high state of civilization.

Whether or not this is the case, one thing becomes evident to those who study the Mosaic legislation most deeply: that it contains all the

essential principles of liberty, and even of a republican form of government. Not only is the Decalogue the basis of every declaration of the rights of man that has ever been made, but the analogy between the form of government contemplated in the Mosaic legislation and the general outlines of our own federal union is startlingly close. But no doubt to our Puritan ancestors the greatest value of the Mosaic legislation lay in the intimate association of the religious with the moral life. The Torah was the living link between the human and the divine, and these exiles to a new country knew how to value such a link. The history of the development of the freedmen, whose religious life during slavery had been so intense, while in the nature of things dissociated from moral discipline, makes clear the value of such a link.

Now, the closeness of this link, and its incalculable value to Israel and to our Puritan ancestors, as well as to all who can appreciate it, lies in something quite different from the fact that all law is, in the nature of things, a revelation of God. It lies in the particular character of the Mosaic law, the nature of God's revelation to Israel, and the ground on which he gave this Torah to them. The ground on which God claimed the obedience of Israel was distinctly not that he was the only true God. The first commandment does not say that he is the only God,

but that Israel must worship none other than him. This first commandment rests on the ground of Israel's relation to Jehovah, not on the ground of Jehovah's unique Godhead. Whenever during the legislative period God claims Israel's allegiance, it is always for no other reason than that Israel stands in a relation of grace to Jehovah. "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself."[3] The preface to the Ten Commandments explicitly states this as the reason why Israel shall have no other God: "I am Jehovah thy God which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other God before me."[4] Children's children were always to be taught that this was the ground on which their keeping of the law was to be based:

> When thy son asketh in time to come, saying, What be the testimonies, the statutes and the judgments which Jehovah our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son: We were Pharoah's bondsmen in Egypt, and Jehovah brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and .... Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes.[5]

If affliction ever came upon a nation, it would be "because they forsook the covenant of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, which he made when he

[3] Ex. 19: 4. [4] Ex. 20: 2. [5] Deut. 6: 20–24.

brought them forth out of the land of Egypt." [6] In other words, the law was given because of the gracious relation already existing between Jehovah and Israel, and all its morality is based on piety. Jehovah was Israel's Savior, and for this reason they ought to obey him: Redemption through grace is the fundamental idea of the law. The gospel is not a departure from the law nor an abrogation of it, but the natural development of the law, its perfected form.

This is why the law, being a gift of grace, was by no means the irksome institution we commonly think it to have been. It was the joy and pride of Israel — a sovereign honor conferred by God.

> For what great nation is there that hath a god so nigh unto them as Jehovah our God is whensoever we call upon him? . . . . For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, whether there hath been any such thing as *this* thing is? [7] [The giving of the Ten Commandments.]

> Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.[8]

The delight of the good man was in the law of Jehovah. Such psalms as 1, 19, 112, 119 express the rapture of the true Israel in contemplating the law.

Furthermore, it is not to be questioned that the obedience of Israel to the rule of Jehovah was a matter of free compact; that they elected

[6] Deut. 29: 25. [7] Deut. 4: 7. 32. [8] Ps. 89: 15.

him to be their sovereign before he gave them the Ten Commandments. "All that Jehovah hath spoken will we do," was their answer to Moses when first encamped at Sinai.[9] And again after receiving the first code of laws, which included the Ten Commandments, "all the people answered with one voice and said, All the words which Jehovah hath said will we do," [10] thus ratifying their previous free choice of God to be their ruler.

A careful reading shows that the group of laws which immediately follow the commandments [11] are a code by themselves. This code is commonly called "The Book of the Covenant," because, as the next chapter tells us, Moses wrote all these words in the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. At this time they ratified their former election of God, saying: "All that Jehovah hath said will we do, and will be obedient;" this covenant being sealed in the blood of the sacrifice that had just been offered.[12]

In the thirty-fourth chapter of Exodus we find a short code commonly called "The Little Book of the Covenant," because, as we are told, "Jehovah said unto Moses, Write thou these words, for after the tenor of the words I have made a covenant with thee and Israel." The first and

[9] Ex. 19: 8.
[10] Ex. 24: 3, 7.
[11] Ex. 20: 20 — 23: 33.
[12] Ex. 24: 5–8.

larger of these covenants [13] forbids the making of images for worship, describes the place of worship (an altar of earth or unhewn stones), gives laws about bond-servants, about capital offenses, injury to the person and property, the principles of loans and trusts, an important law about women, rules for the administration of justice, the sabbath law, the three great feasts, the elementary rules about sacrifices, and a law of kindliness; thus including civil, criminal, juristic, social, and religious laws. The Little Book of the Covenant, though shorter, is of much the same character.

Another code may easily be recognized; [14] it is called the Holiness Code. It is a very interesting collection of laws, based on the statement of God, "I am Jehovah." This statement, with occasional additions, occurs forty-seven times in this code, coming in like a refrain and evidently with the usual purpose of the refrain, to aid the memory. This body of laws receives its name of Holiness Code from the opening words of chap. 19: "Ye shall be holy, for I, Jehovah your God, am holy," all its statutes being based on God's holiness. Next to the Book of the Covenant, this is the most important and interesting code until we come to Deuteronomy. Before this, however, are several other codes: in Exodus, a code of laws about the tabernacle and the priesthood; [15] in Leviticus, a

[13] Ex. 20: 20 — 23: 33.
[14] Lev., chaps. 17–26.
[15] Ex., chaps. 25–30.

code of laws of sacrifice, purification, and atonement;[16] a brief code at the close of that book relating to vows and tithes;[17] a short code in Numbers relating to the priests and Levites, and to the rite of purification,[18] and another of five chapters[19] containing the law of inheritance of daughters,[20] the priestly calendar of public sacrifice, and the law of vows.

III

The question of the laboring classes — the relation of labor to capital, as we phrase it — has become so importunate in this time in which we live that it is almost startling to find a similar question taking front rank in the Torah; and that one phase of it, the relation of employer and employed, has the very first place after duty to Jehovah, in the very first code given after the Ten Commandments — that Book of the Covenant which immediately follows the Decalogue.[21] Of course, among agricultural people of that time, not only the household servant but the farm laborer, the chief employé, was a slave. Slavery was the almost universal form of servitude in ancient times, and Israel was like other nations in this

[16] Lev., chaps. 1–7.
[17] Lev., chap. 27.
[18] Num., chaps. 18, 19.
[19] Num., chaps. 27–31.
[20] Modified 36: 8, 9 to meet a new contingency.
[21] Ex. 20: 20 — 23: 33.

respect. But the status of the slave was so different in Israel, and indeed in all the East at that time, from modern slavery, that the translators of the Revised Version did perfectly right in never using the word "slave" and substituting for it the words "bondman" and "bondwoman." The word "servant" in the Authorized Version, does not give an accurate idea.

Slavery was so universal in ancient times that we find so great a moralist and so wise a political economist as Aristotle laying it down as a principle that slavery was essential to the well-being of the state, and we know that this was the almost universal belief. How striking it is then to find that Israel's legislation ordained that no Hebrew might be sold as a bondman under any circumstances except that of being a thief unable to make restitution for theft.[22] If he were bitterly poor, he could sell himself,[23] but no one else could sell him as a poor man.[24] In no case could ownership of a Hebrew by another last longer than six years, whatever the cause of his servitude.[25] In the sabbatical year, which occurred once in seven years, every Hebrew went free. It is worthy of note that it was taken for granted that

[22] Ex. 22: 3*b*.

[23] Lev. 25: 39, 47; cf. vss. 44, 46.

[24] Compare the farming out of paupers in some of our own states.

[25] Ex. 21: 2.

the economic condition of the self-enslaved poor man would have so improved during his years of bondage that he could go on as a free man after that. And the bondman always, at any time during these six years, had the right to redeem himself or to be redeemed by a relative.[26] The only exception to the sabbatical enfranchisement was the case of the bondman who, during his servitude, might have married and had children, and who for love of them preferred to remain with his master.[27] But the later legislation of Leviticus brings this condition of servitude to an end in the jubilee year.[28]

It seems barbarous to sell a man for debt, but this law, with its release in the seventh, or even in the fiftieth year, was incomparably more humane than laws of imprisonment for debt which until very lately prevailed in England; and it was based on a better economic principle than imprisonment, not only in the case of the debtor, but also in that of the thief; for instead of keeping them in idleness at the public charge, the labor of both was turned to the profit of those who had lost by their means, or to that of the state. The provision for the self-enslavement of the poor man, however shocking it may seem, is much

[26] Lev. 25: 48, 49.

[27] Ex. 21: 4–6.

[28] Lev. 25: 39–41. The longer period of servitude carried with it restoration to his possessions when enfranchisement came.

more truly humane, wise, and economic than the system which fosters tramps, and ends in that foul sink, pauperization, which is the disgrace of all modern social systems. There was no "submerged tenth" in Israel, and the position of the self-enslaved poor man was most delicately guarded. "Thou shalt not make him to serve as a bondman; as a hired servant, and as a sojourner (a guest)[29] he shall be with thee . . . . (like the poor relations who are so often the blessing of our homes) for they are my servants, which I brought out of Egypt; they shall not be sold as bondmen." [30] The entire law was based upon the relation of Israel to Jehovah. Very careful provision was made that the released bondman should not at once fall again into poverty. A better provision than modern prison-gate missions are able to make lies in the law that in the sabbatic year the released bondman was not to be sent away destitute:

> Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock and out of thy threshing floor, and out of thy wine press; as Jehovah, thy God, has blessed thee, thou shalt give unto him.[31]

The personal rights of the bondman were carefully guarded. His right to the weekly sabbath rest was important enough to have a place in the

[29] Lev. 25: 39–42.

[30] The general force of the word "sojourner" will be considered later. Here it obviously means a guest.

[31] Deut. 15: 12–14.

Decalogue, emphasized in the deuteronomic version of the Ten Commandments—"that thy bondman and bondwoman may rest as well as thou."[32] The infliction upon him by his master of such an injury as the loss of an eye, or even a tooth, gave him the immediate right to liberty.[33] If the owner punished his bondman with such severity that he died under the rod, the owner himself was to be punished.[34] It is true the law adds: "Nevertheless if he continue a day or two he shall not be punished, for he is his money." And this sounds cold-blooded; but we may recall to mind that precisely this ground was taken under our own slave system: the money loss was held to be the master's sufficient punishment for having fatally injured his slave; while to institute inquiry whether the unfortunate creature died under his master's hand, or lingered a day or two, was not so much as thought of.

In Israel the oppressed slave always had the refuge of flight. "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master a servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell among thee in any of thy cities where it liketh him best. Thou

[32] Deut. 5: 14.

[33] Ex. 21: 26, 27. The Hammurabi Code enacts that he who caused the injury shall pay half the slave's price to the master, who alone is supposed to be the injured party.

[34] Ex. 21: 20.

shalt not oppress him." [35] Apologists for American slavery always justified the system on Bible grounds; but this law was evidently overlooked by the framers of that Fugitive Slave Law, whose enactment occurred within the memory of some now living, impelling Mrs. Stowe to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[36] Man-stealing with a view to enslavement was a capital crime: "that thief shall die." [37]

All nations enslaved prisoners of war, and Israel did the same; the Torah permitted aliens to be enslaved in perpetuity, and to be bequeathed to children and children's children; [38] but this seems to be a provision of humanity, since under the Hebrew institutions they could own no land; and the subsequent history of Israel gives so many instances of such slaves being merged in the families of those who owned them and becoming a part of the great family of Israel, that it is evident that they stood upon very much the same high ground of privilege as other bondmen and aliens not enslaved.

When we recall to mind that in nearly all lan-

[35] Deut. 23: 15, 16.

[36] The Hammurabi Code shows greater sympathy with our legislation than with that of Moses. It went farther, however, and decreed the death penalty for him who did not produce the fugitive "at the demand of the commandant" or who hid him in his house.

[37] Deut. 24: 7; Ex. 21: 16. The Hammurabi Code makes it a capital crime to steal a slave, the interest being not in human but in property rights.

[38] Lev. 25: 45, 46.

guages of the world the same word does duty for "foreigner" and "enemy"— that being the case in the primary meaning of the word in languages so recent even as the Italian and the German — the delicate consideration with which the foreigner is treated in the Mosaic legislation is simply amazing. It points directly to the perfect state, and is the beginning of the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham, the blessing of all men. I have counted seventeen places where the stranger is either made the subject of special legislation or else is grouped with those objects of God's peculiar solicitude, the widow and the fatherless. And as if to make doubly sure the assurance that the special laws for the stranger shall be kept, they are always based upon the pathetic memory of Israel's own experience:[39] "Thou shalt not oppress a stranger — for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt. Thou shalt love him as thyself, for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." The resident foreigner was to have the same right as Israel to the protection of the cities of refuge, and to public justice;[40] there was to be "one law for the stranger and for him that was born in the land." The resident foreigner had a right, with the poor, the fatherless, and the widow, to the

[39] Ex. 22: 21; 23: 9; Lev. 19: 33, 34, etc.
[40] Ex. 12: 49; Num. 15: 16.

gleanings of the fields and the vineyards, and the spontaneous fruits of the sabbatical year.[41] Even to the sacred feasts he had access on condition of being circumcised.[42] Only in three things was a difference to be made: A foreigner might never be king;[43] usury, that is interest, might be asked of him;[44] and if a prisoner of war he might be perpetually enslaved, under the mild slave system of Israel.[45]

IV

One of the burning questions of today is the ownership of land. The accumulation of large tracts of land in the possession of individuals or of syndicates is fast becoming a serious menace to the prosperity of this country, as well as of Great Britain. The natural, almost inevitable, consequence of this state of things is the socialistic doctrine of the public ownership of land. With marvelous wisdom the Mosaic legislation keeps clear of both these evils — the excessive individualism which permits a single man to accumulate vast possessions, and socialism which gives all the land to the state.

The principle of land-ownership is distinctly laid down in Lev. 25:23: "*The land is mine.*" The whole land of Canaan was God's and was by

[41] Ex. 23:11; Lev. 19:10; Deut. 14:19–22.
[42] Ex. 12:44, 48.
[43] Deut. 17:15.
[44] Deut. 23:20.
[45] Lev. 25:45, 46.

him given to the nation to be divided between the 600,000 families of Israel. Each father of a family had his own homestead, tilling his own land and sitting under his own vine and fig tree; but no one had an absolute right in this property of God. In case of poverty a man might sell his land, but not "forever"—that is, in perpetuity; he might not so impoverish his heirs.[46] Nor could the rich, however wealthy, accumulate large estates. Not only had the original owner of the land the right of redemption at any time, but his next of kin might redeem it for him. In any case it returned to his family in the jubilee year.[47]

The one exception was the land of the Levites, which might in no case be sold.[48]

Far from such provisions having a socialistic tendency, they were eminently calculated to heighten a true individualism. It is doubtful if any legislation has so effective a *via media* between socialism and a selfish and unscrupulous individualism in the matter of land-tenure.[49]

With such a land system it is needless to say

[46] Lev. 25: 23.

[47] Lev. 25: 25–31.

[48] Lev. 25: 34.

[49] The Hammurabi Code has little to say about land-ownership, except that one in public service (an officer or a constable) may not neglect the cultivation of his land, but must provide a substitute for himself, wife, son, or another. There is an express prohibition of the sale of the land of such a one. On the other hand, a merchant or a foreign sojourner is expressly permitted to sell his real estate. There is much about the duties of lessees and metayers, much about trespass; and irrigation laws are very strict.

that the law contemplates a separate house for each family.[50] Even in cities this is the case. Such a system of housing the poor as now curses civilized peoples, reaching even into country villages, was impossible in Palestine. Not only had each family its separate house, but the laws both as to construction and sanitation were explicit and rigid. Sanitary inspectors tell us that the description in Leviticus of the "leprosy of a house" precisely describes conditions well known to them in old buildings, and that the only known remedies are those which are there prescribed.[51] The rules for the destruction of offal and refuse were very strict; there were no cesspools, no kitchen-middens in Palestine, no such dung-hills as in the early part of last century stood before every cottage door in Scotland, no such ash-heap as Job and his friends sat upon together.

All these regulations tended directly to preserve the sacredness of the family. The rights of children as to inheritance were jealously guarded.[52] The eldest son, upon whom would fall the burden of the widows, unmarried daughters, and poor members of the family, had a double portion.

[50] Implied in such passages as Num. 26: 53, 54; 33: 54; Deut. 40: 20.

[51] Lev. 14: 33–53.

[52] Num. 27: 8–11; 36: 8, 9; Deut. 31: 16, 17. The Hammurabi Code, with very evident desire for strict justice (§§ 167–71), yet permits favoritism on the part of the father (§ 165) or the widowed mother (§ 150).

The other sons all shared alike. It was rigidly enacted that in case of more than one wife the son of the favorite might not be preferred before the son of the less beloved, if the latter were the elder.

V

No other system of jurisprudence in any country at any period is marked with such humanity with respect to the unfortunate. We have already seen something of this with regard to the poor man and the debtor. The widow and the fatherless were always the peculiar care of God; the severest penalties were pronounced against their oppressors:

> Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword; and your wives shall be widows, and your children be fatherless.[53]
>
> Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take the widow's raiment to pledge.[54]

Three classes, the widow, the fatherless, and the resident alien, were always to be remem-

[53] Ex. 22: 22–24; Deut. 27: 19. The Hammurabi Code considers only the dower rights of the widow and her duty to minor children. She may not contract a second marriage without consent of the judge, and the second husband must give bonds for the maintenance of minor children. A *poor* widow does not enter the purview of the Code. Nor do destitute children.

[54] Ex. 22: 22–24; Deut. 24: 17. Widows' raiment makes half the assets of our pawn-shops.

bered when the harvest was carried home;[55] the corners of the fields were not to be reaped, nor was the field or vineyard to be gleaned, and if by accident a sheaf was left behind in the field, no one was to go back for it. The olive trees were not to be twice beaten nor the vineyard gone over a second time; all that was left was for these classes. With the widow and the fatherless are thus always joined the poor and the stranger — the resident alien.[56]

Those who deal in scientific charity are wont to say that if every poor person had a friendly visitor — a prosperous man or woman as a real friend — the problem of poverty would be half solved. This was precisely the case contemplated by the Torah. Every householder was supposed to be in immediate relations with the poor, not only through these laws which we have just seen, but by the law that made the poor sharers in the joyful feasts of the prosperous. In the Harvest Home, the Feast of Ingathering:

> Thou shalt rejoice before Jehovah, thy God, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which Jehovah thy God hath chosen to place his name there.[57]

[55] Lev. 19: 9, 10; Deut. 24: 19–21.
[56] Deut. 24: 19.
[57] Deut. 16: 11.

Once in three years all the tithes, which otherwise went for the maintenance of the priesthood and the house of God, were to be shared with the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow. The danger of pauperization by all these gifts was carefully guarded against by three methods: by the necessity of work for those who would benefit by the gleanings of field and vineyard and orchard, by the sharing with their benefactors in the joyful feasts (how unlike the dinners distributed by our churches and benevolent societies at Thanksgiving and Christmastide), and, in the case of the tithe of the third year, by the deeply religious character of the gift. It could be accepted by the poor only at the close of a solemn dedication which the giver said before Jehovah, apparently in the presence of the beneficiary.[58]

And the sacred character of the gift was enhanced by the fact that the Levite had his portion with the widow, the fatherless, and the stranger. Under such laws the command, "There shall be no poor with thee,"[59] was not a promise but a command: "Howbeit let there be no poor with thee, for Jehovah will surely bless thee in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth for an inheritance to possess it: if only thou diligently hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God," etc. And so our Lord's remark, "The poor ye have

[58] Deut. 26: 13–15. [59] Deut. 15: 4.

always with you," [60] was not a prophecy, telling his disciples all through time what they have a right to expect, but the statement of a discreditable fact, actually prevailing at that time, and due to the lapse of the laws from active functioning.

Poverty was understood to be merely an accident, never a settled condition, and it was the duty of every man to prevent it as far as possible by a special care for any neighbor who seemed to be "waxing poor." [61] Where it existed poverty was hedged about with most delicate consideration. The creditor might not go into a poor man's house to take the article pledged as security: he must stand outside till the owner brought it to him.[62] The widow's raiment might never thus be pledged, and if a poor man pledged his garment, it must be returned to him before sundown, that he might not sleep cold.[63] In no case

[60] John 12: 8.

[61] Lev. 25: 35–38. The Hammurabi Code treats the poor man, not as the subject of special consideration, but the reverse. If one steals an animal from "a god (temple) or a palace" (a priest or a man of rank or wealth), he is to pay thirty-fold; if from poor man, tenfold. The poor man, like the fugitive slave, must be given up at the demand of justice (the creditor) under pain of death. Whereas an injury to "a man's (i. e., gentleman's)" eye, limb, or tooth must be dealt with by the *lex talionis*. the like injury to a poor man may be condoned on payment of a fine. If a rich man is killed by accident, the fine is a third more than in the case of a poor man. These distinctions appear in part to rest on the theory that a poor man values money more than honor. The fine of a poor man for assault is a third of that of "a man (of gentle birth)." There is no indication of the delicate consideration of the poor everywhere shown in the Mosaic legislation.

[62] Deut. 24: 10, 11.

[63] Deut. 24: 17, 12, 13; Ex. 22: 25–27.

was interest to be taken from a brother-Israelite.[64] Modern laws concerning mortgage and other security are all for the protection of the creditor; in Israel they were for the protection of the debtor. The dignified status of the poor man is seen in the ordinance that the ransom money which each individual paid to Jehovah was to be an invariable sum — half a shekel, whatever the ability of the payer: [65] the souls of poor and rich are equally precious in the sight of God. With all these delicate provisions for the poor, there was to be no mawkish sentimentality. It is very striking that the command is three times given, "thou shalt not favor a poor man in his cause." [66] In one case it is added, "nor honor the person of the mighty;" neither sentimentality nor prejudice, but *justice,* was the law.

VI

We have more than once had occasion to observe the honorable status of woman in Israel. A comparison of the Mosaic legislation for women with the legislation of any modern state — the most advanced — shows how far the best civilization, in matters truly essential, falls below the

[64] Deut. 23: 19, 20. The Hammurabi Code remits interest in case of destruction of crops by storm or drought. In other cases it permits distraint of household or other goods where crops do not suffice to meet a man's indebtedness.

[65] Ex. 30: 12–15.

[66] Ex. 23: 3; Lev. 19: 15; cf. Deut. 1: 17.

pattern given in the Mount. We know that women could not only inherit but buy property, the latter with no other restrictions than entered into the general system, the former with only the restriction constitutionally necessary, that they must marry within their own tribe.

Not only industrially, so far as we can see,[67] was the woman on a par with the man (wise-hearted women working with Bezaleel in the making of the tabernacle); but the intense interest of women in the politics of their country shines out from every page. There were women among the prophets and among the sages, and one woman at least, Huldah the prophetess, was a member of the privy council of the king.[68]

One reason — *the* reason perhaps — why woman held so exalted a status in Israel, was the conception of the functions of man in the state. As a recent writer has remarked, the question at the root of all political systems is whether man is regarded as a member of a household, or only as a citizen and soldier. If the latter, then the logical result is that women, being non-combatants, must stand on a lower plane than men.

[67] Ex. 3: 25, 26; cf. 36: 6. There is no consideration of woman as such in the Hammurabi Code. She is wife, widow, daughter, or votary (devotee). It is interesting, in view of some of our own problems, to note that the Hammurabi Code holds neither husband nor wife liable for debts of the other contracted before marriage; both are equally liable after marriage.

[68] 2 Kings 22: 14 ff.

But in Judea men were not regarded as soldiers and citizens first, but first as members of the family. It is always as father, husband, son, or brother that we know the biblical characters, and the status of women is therefore wholly different from what it was in Rome, where household relationships were a minor consideration, and where the husband and father, being first of all soldier or citizen, had almost absolute power, not only over his wife and daughter, but over his son as well. All modern civilization is based, not upon the Hebrew, but upon the Roman system. May it not be due to this fact that at least the theoretical position of women is so unsatisfactory, and that the advocates and opponents of reform in this matter are alike apt to be unwise and unjust?

Whether or not the economic position of women among the Hebrews was all that would satisfy the twentieth century, it is certain that in all sexual relations women's interests were safeguarded with a peculiar care utterly unknown to modern legislation. Undoubtedly polygamy and divorce were allowed. It cannot be said that they were sanctioned; they existed everywhere at that period, and it would not have been in accordance with the law of moral development if among the Hebrew people they had been summarily forbidden. But neither were they en-

joined, and everything was done to regulate and render them as little injurious as possible. In fact, the marriage laws were very far in advance of that time, and, in certain respects, of any time up to the present.

The eighteenth chapter of Leviticus restricts the possibilities of polygamy within very narrow limits. Divorce was made difficult by the necessity of a regular procedure — a thing unknown in early times in other countries, where a man might put away his wife without ceremony.[69] In Israel he must give her a written bill (literally "a book") of divorcement.[70] This was a very serious check upon divorce in an age when only a learned class could write, and when therefore it was nearly always necessary to resort to some acknowledged authority, who would require satisfactory reasons for this step before making out the papers. A further check was given by the law which made divorce irreparable — a man might not take back his divorced wife.[71] In two cases, to be presently mentioned, the right of divorce was withheld. It will be observed that

[69] Even in the Hammurabi Code this was the case, although a man might not put away his wife portionless (§§ 137–40) except for cause (§ 141). In the latter case investigation was required (§§ 141, 142), evidently in the interests of the woman's property rights, not to put any check upon divorce. I should like to call the attention of our legislators to the provision for truant husbands (§ 136).

[70] Deut. 24: 1.

[71] Deut. 24: 4.

they are the very cases where a man would be most likely to wish to put away his wife, having already been unjust to her. We must bear in mind that in a primitive state of society every woman *must* be married (for protection),[72] and there is no reason, therefore, to suppose that a motion for divorce would ever come from the woman. Though her husband were cruel, he would be better than no husband at all.

Infidelity to the marriage vow was punished by the death of both parties.[73] The seduction of a concubine was an exception to this law: both parties were to be punished, but not by death. Apparently both were to be punished alike. If a man dishonored a betrothed girl, both were to be put to death, except in the case where the act occurred in a lonely place; then the girl had the benefit of the doubt, and the man only was put to death.[74] In case of seduction of a girl who was not betrothed, marriage was obligatory, and the man was bound to pay a large dowry to the father. And this is one of the cases where no

[72] Unless, as the Hammurabi Code and the customs of many peoples provided, she became a "devotee," a condition unthinkable to the pure-minded legislators of Israel, though not to the pre-exilic practice.

[73] Lev. 20: 10; Deut. 22: 22. The Hammurabi Code provides the death penalty for those caught *in flagrante delictu*, yet "if the husband of the woman would save his wife or if the king would save his male servant (he may)." The case of a concubine is not considered.

[74] Deut. 22: 23–27. The Hammurabi Code is more lenient; in either case the girl goes free, "the man shall be put to death."

divorce was allowed.[75] The other case where divorce is forbidden is equally striking:

If a man take a wife, and afterward hate her, and lay shameful things to her charge, and bring an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and found her not to be a virgin; and it be tried, and it be false; then the elders of that city shall take that man and scourge him; and they shall amerce him in a hundred shekels of silver, and give them to the father of the damsel, because he hath brought an evil name upon a virgin of Israel; and she shall be his wife, *whom he shall not put away all his life.*[76]

Even in this stringent guarding of woman's honor there is no sentimentality. Such a charge, if proved true, brought the death penalty upon the woman.

The law concerning female captives taken in war is remarkable for its delicacy and the restraint imposed upon the captor. We have only to call to mind the treatment of women in sacked towns almost to the present day, the treatment of women in Armenia in our own day, to appreciate this:

If thou seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire for her, and wouldst take her to thee

[75] Deut. 22: 28, 29; but cf. Ex. 22: 16, 17. The Hammurabi Code considers incest and the seduction by a man of his betrothed daughter-in-law. The penalties of the former vary from death to exile. In the latter case the man pays a fine to the woman, and she goes back to her father, free to marry "the man of her choice."

[76] Deut. 22: 13–19. The summaries of the law are from *Scriptures Hebrew and Christian* by E. T. Bartlett and John P. Peters.

to wife, thou shalt bring her to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails, and put off from her the raiment of her captivity [that is, she shall have the privilege of mourning] and dwell in thy house, and bewail her father and mother a full month. Afterward, thou shalt marry her, and she shall be thy wife. And if thou find no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go free. Thou shalt not sell her for money, thou shalt not deal with her as a chattel, because thou hast humbled her.[77]

In case of a husband's jealousy the appeal to the ordeal was allowed (the bitter water that causeth the curse), and this is the only instance of ordeal permitted by the Mosaic legislation.[78] It is not many hundred years since all sorts of questions — of inheritance, of chastity, of orthodoxy, accusations of witchcraft, etc.— were submitted to the ordeal, so that the Mosaic legislation is advanced indeed. It is evident that this one appeal to ordeal is permitted that it may be strictly regulated, and not permitted in any other case, thus counteracting the natural tendency of men to seek this method of arriving at a decision.[79]

From this slight survey it seems evident that the Mosaic code is in advance of any system of laws now in force so far as consideration for

[77] Deut. 21: 10–14.

[78] Num. 5: 12–28. The ordeal is permitted by the Hammurabi Code in a like case, and also in the case of sorcery. In this case the ordeal is that applied to witches in more modern times, "sink or swim."

[79] A method still more frequently practiced than is generally realized; for instance, in the tossing up of a cent, choosing right or left hand, etc.

women is concerned, as the struggle good women are making in many states of our Union today to get the "age of consent" raised above sixteen years, fourteen, even ten years, will suffice to indicate. The whole spirit of the Mosaic laws is the protection of the weaker against the stronger, of the girl against her betrayer, the debtor against his creditor, the oppressed against the oppressor. No other body of laws equals this code in delicate thoughtfulness and beneficent humaneness.[80]

VII

The share that animals are to have in the perfect state of the Hebrew prophets is reflected from the Torah, which includes them in the protection of the weak against the strong. The fourth commandment provides for the rest of cattle as well as servants. The strayed beast was to be led home to its master, the overladen beast to be relieved by anyone who came along.[81] It was forbidden to take the mother-bird from the nest (perhaps in the case of taking birds for sacrifice), for in that case the young would suffer.[82] Better to take the young and leave the mother to raise another brood. The ox that trode the corn was not to be muzzled, but permitted to eat as he

[80] This may still be said, notwithstanding the remarkable justice of many provisions of the Hammurabi Code.

[81] Ex. 23: 4, 5; Deut. 22: 1–4.

[82] Deut. 22: 6, 7.

chose.[83] The self-grown fruits of the sabbatical year were not only for the poor; "What they leave the beasts of the field shall eat." [84] Entirely in the spirit of a most refined humanity was the prohibition to slaughter a ewe and her lamb on the same day, or to cook a kid in its mother's milk.[85] These laws, which appear to be purely sentimental, show that sentiment also has its place in the education of a nation.

The love for nature shown in the Torah very strikingly prefigures the utopia of the Hebrew prophets. It is evident that the law-giver felt in his deepest heart that the order of nature is an expression of the mind of God. The divine right of the soil to its period of rest is shown in the institution of the sabbatical and jubilee years. There was more than a prudential motive in this law, more than the mere attempt to prevent the exhaustion of the soil. An ethical motive lay at the bottom of it, the feeling that nature has a right to be set free from service and left to herself — to enjoy her sabbaths. In the later years, when people began to make haste to be rich, the sabbatic and jubilee laws were not kept,[86] and when the captivity came it was in part, we are

[83] Deut. 25: 4.

[84] Ex. 23: 11. Cf. the game laws of some civilized countries today.

[85] Ex. 23: 19.

[86] Many scholars question if they ever were kept.

told, that the land might at last have her rights and enjoy her sabbaths.

VIII

The spirit of humanity is nowhere more obvious than in the criminal laws of the Hebrews. I am aware that the contrary opinion prevails. We must bear in mind the object of these laws: "To form a horde of newly enfranchised slaves into habits of perfect obedience, based on ethical and religious grounds." We must remember that much more severe regulations are required for waifs and child criminals in our refuges and reformatories than for the children in a Christian family. No doubt there is a great degree of rigor in the Torah, but rigor is not a sign of barbarism, but of civilization. Intelligent parents are much more strict than ignorant parents. Barbarism is lax, and severity is not necessarily cruel. We must remember, too, that the entire body of laws is based on the covenant idea.

In the Mosaic code there are five classes of crime punishable with death:[87] blasphemy,[88] idolatry, including witchcraft,[89] cursing parents or incorrigible disobedience,[90] murder,[91] adul-

[87] In all eighteen capital crimes are named in the various codes, but they may all be reduced under these five heads. Professor Kent makes seven.

[88] Lev. 24: 16.

[89] Lev. 20: 27; Deut. 17: 3–6.

[90] Lev. 20: 9.

[91] Lev. 24: 17; Num. 35: 30, 31.

tery.[92] In England two hundred years ago there were 148 crimes which incurred the death penalty. Of the five crimes punishable by death under the Torah, the first two, blasphemy and idolatry, were high treason in view of the covenant — the children of Israel's free election of God to be their ruler. It must be noted, however, that only the overt act of blasphemy, idolatry, etc., was punished. There was no such thing as suffering for opinion, no arrest on suspicion, no heresy trials.

The third category of capital crime (cursing parents or incorrigible disobedience) appears to have come under the same head — treason — since parents represent God, and rule by authority delegated by him. The laws concerning respect to parents were exceedingly strict. "He that smiteth father or mother shall surely be put to death"— a simple blow.[93] Parricide appears to have been unthinkable. To strike a parent was as bad as to kill another person. He that set light by his father or his mother was to be accursed.[94]

Of the fourth and fifth capital crimes, murder has always been punishable by death; adultery never has been in any state but Palestine, though

[92] Lev. 20: 10.

[93] Ex. 21: 15. In the Hammurabi Code the penalty is cutting off the hands.

[94] Deut. 27: 16.

popular opinion has never been severe upon the injured husband who avenged himself. In this country there are now, as in early Israel, five capital crimes; but a number of crimes are punished with life-imprisonment, which is virtually death. Among the Israelites there was no such thing as imprisonment, with all its associate evils of expense to the law-abiding community, criminal contact, and idleness, and with its long train of "problems of penology." Nor were there any cruel punishments; torture was absolutely unknown; exile, banishment, confiscation, the rack, wheel, knout, burying alive, dark cells, pillory, stocks — all of them Christian punishments — had no place in Hebrew legislation.

As to penalties, only four were known to Hebrew criminal law: forty stripes save one,[95] like for like,[96] restitution with compensation,[97] death.[98] Stoning, the usual form of the death penalty, does indeed appear to be more cruel than hanging, beheading, or shooting, but it is tender mercy to some forms of the death penalty practiced in England less than two centuries ago.

The law of like for like — the *jus talionis,*

[95] Deut. 25: 3.

[96] Ex. 21: 23–25; Deut. 19: 21. The Mosaic code appears to have been much influenced in this respect by that of Hammurabi.

[97] Ex. 22: 1–4. This also is prominent in the Hammurabi Code.

[98] Deut. 21: 21; Num. 15: 35.

"eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, stripe for stripe"— seems to speak of a barbarous age; perhaps it does. Its influence certainly meets that demand for literal justice which expresses itself in lynch law, and it is without question incomparably better from every point of view than lynch law.[99]

Laws of retaliation are found in the best codes of all ancient peoples — those of Rhadamanthus, Solon, of the Ten Tables, and especially in the Code of Hammurabi, which evidently had much influence upon the Mosaic legislation, especially the earlier codes. They were assuredly needed in that day to prevent men taking the law into their own hands. It was, indeed, expressly commanded that men should not take vengeance, nor even so much as bear a grudge against their neighbor.[100] There is certainly poetic justice in that part of this law which requires that the punishment shall fall upon a false witness which he thought to have done unto his brother.[101]

No other ancient law made such provision for the protection of the accused. Two witnesses at least must agree, and perjury was severely pun-

[99] I have been told by some mothers that there is one fault of which "like for like" appears to be the only cure; that is, the childish fault of biting. A biting child can be cured only by being bitten.

[100] Lev. 19: 18.

[101] Deut. 19: 16–19; so the Hammurabi Code.

ished.[102] Yet here is no sentimentality. No law makes such provision for the detection of crime. Under no circumstances did murder go unpunished. When the criminal was not known, so large a number of the people were held responsible that it was everybody's interest to find the culprit.[103]

In general, a high sense of honor was cultivated by the fact that crimes which might be known only to God required for their forgiveness by him open confession and the offering of a costly sacrifice.[104] Many sins thus confessed involved heavy pecuniary loss, but they were confessed, and the loss was borne. The value of an enlightened public opinion in such matters was almost inconceivably great — inconceivable at least by us who live under conditions in which public opinion is all the other way — no man being required, and hardly being permitted, to incriminate himself.

Property laws were of a very high order. Stolen goods were to be restored fivefold;[105] if the thief was unable to make restitution, he was to be sold for the debt — always regaining his freedom in the sabbatic year. Carelessness in leaving open uncovered pits, or in kindling fires, or in the care of loaned or intrusted property,

[102] Num. 35: 30; Deut. 17: 6, 16, 19. The Hammurabi Code inflicts death in case of capital crime.

[103] Deut. 21: 1–9. [104] Num. 5: 5–8. [105] Ex. 22: 1, 3.

was strictly but fairly dealt with.[106] The most beneficent of all institutions, far wiser than our bankrupt laws, was the release of the jubilee year,[107] when debts, having been paid so far as possible by the enforced service of the debtor, were finally wiped out, slavery ceased, property reverted to its original owner.

IX

I have not space so much as to touch upon the sanitary laws, the admirable character of which is daily vouched for by the longevity and good health of the Hebrew people even under the most adverse circumstances. Nor is there space for more than a mere allusion to the military statutes, which are very interesting. They are in a very true sense the goal to which modern theory is constantly tending, and a whole heaven in advance of modern practice. No standing army was kept; all the people were soldiers when the time came, an ideal perhaps more nearly reached by America than by any other nation. The list of exemptions from military duty are very significant, showing a high degree of refined consideration.[108] A man who had built, but had not yet entered, a new house; who had planted a vineyard, but not eaten of it; or who was betrothed or newly married, was exempt. Still

[106] Ex. 22: 36, 7–15. [107] Lev. 25: 8–13. [108] Deut. 20: 5–9.

more important was the exemption of all who were feeble and faint-hearted. The demoralizing effect of such soldiers was very clearly recognized. A very important and very modern feature of Hebrew warfare is that negotiations were always tried before war was declared. Jephthah addressed a long and earnest remonstrance to the king of Ammon before accepting his challenge to war,[109] and this was precisely in accordance with the law. "When thou drawest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it." [110] Moses tried negotiations with the king of Edom,[111] and when these failed, he still declined to offer him battle, though when negotiations afterward failed with the king of the Ammonites he attacked and subdued him. Evidently both principle and practice were in this respect in the direct line of preparation for the messianic kingdom — for the arbitration for which all public-spirited people are working now.

X

A few words as to the constitution of the Hebrew state — a subject which would reward detailed study. The government was, as has been said, a remarkable instance of the purest form of free republican government. It was neither patriarchal nor despotic. We must not allow our-

[109] Judg. 11: 12–28. [110] Deut. 20: 10. [111] Num. 20: 14.

selves to be misled by Josephus' term "theocracy"— though it is in a measure correct. God was the Sovereign of the state, but he was a Sovereign freely elected by the whole people.[112] One important result of this fact was that all offenses were not only offenses against law, but sin against God. The assent of the whole people to the covenant gave them a popular constitution, and had a great moral effect, giving to the law the authority of common consent, binding them all, not only to God, but to one another. We are told how Moses instituted the government in republican form. "Take you," he said to the people, "wise men and understanding and known among your tribes and I will make them heads over you."[113]

Thus we find the judges (in a later time the king, who was simply the judge of the whole nation, not of a tribe or group of tribes) chosen by popular suffrage. Their qualifications,[114] "such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness," precisely meet Jefferson's test of official capacity: "Is he just, is he honest, is he capable?" adding one more: "Does he fear God?"

The government was practically a United States. The tribal authority was great, though subordinate to the central authority, the judge, the king. At the head of government, under

[112] See *ante*, pp. 336f. [113] Deut. 1: 13. [114] Ex. 18: 21.

Jehovah, were the king or the judge, the priests and Levites, whose special political function it was to preserve the union of the tribes, and guard the letter and spirit of the fundamental law. There were two legislative assemblies, an upper and a lower house;[115] there was a complete system of courts, upper and lower[116]— heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens — the subdivision of courts entirely doing away with the law's delay. There was, when occasion required, a generalissimo, whether judge or king, whose function it was to have charge of the force directed against enemies;[117] and, lastly, there was the prophetic order, whose chief function was the formation of public opinion. All these offices were elective except that of the prophet, who was called by God, those of priests and Levites, which were hereditary, and later the generalissimo or king (who, however, was elected in the first instance: Judg. 8:22; 1 Sam. 11:12; 2 Sam. 5:1–3; 1 Kings 12:20). They constituted a remarkable system of checks and balances such as it is the first necessity of every republican government to provide. The system was a model of pro-

[115] "The princes of the tribes" of Num. 7:2 *passim* and "the elders of the people," Ex. 17:5, etc.; cf. Deut. 27:1.

[116] Ex. 18:25, 26; Deut. 17:8–11.

[117] In later times the king delegated this office to another (Joab, etc.), very much as does the President of the United States, who is commander-in-chief of the army.

vincial, that is tribal, and municipal government. All men were politically equal, and all had their part in the government by their representatives, who met in regularly constituted assemblies,[118] not at stated times like our government, but whenever a new law was to be framed.

As an illustration of the wise system of checks and balances, I may instance the organization of the Levites. They, being the representatives of knowledge, the learned class, would have been a menace to the state if they had also had property, for the union of property with learning gives unlimited political power. But it was specially arranged that they should have no property.[119] No part of the land was given to them, they were collected in cities, where, in case of conspiracy, they could be easily handled. Not Lycurgus, Solon, or Numa was able to devise a system so potent to prevent faction or so admirably self-checking in all its parts. The Hebrew people were not learned, but they were thoroughly educated in the laws and history of their own country, and no doubt reading and writing were more widely disseminated among them than among almost any people. The three annual festivals of the year were a bond of sympathy between the

[118] Deut. 5: 1; 29: 2; 31: 1.

[119] Num. 18: 20, 21, 24; Deut. 10: 9.

tribes and trained them in the arts of social life.[120]

It is commonly said that Moses owed much of his legislation to the wisdom of the Egyptians, in which he had been trained; but the more we learn of Egypt at that time, the more we see how little it influenced the Hebrews. Egypt never began to be as civilized as the Torah. In art and science, indeed, she went far beyond the Hebrews, but the slaves who were making brick for Egypt's treasure cities would not be brought in contact with art and learning. The government of Egypt was monarchical, her religion was idolatrous, and her civilization depraved to a degree never dreamed of in the worst days of Greece or Rome. Not from Egypt did the Hebrews bring their civilization of high principles and of right practice in the common relations and customs of life. Since the Hammurabi Code was discovered, it is said by many, and with more of justice, that Israel owes its remarkable legislation to Assyrian influence. But I think even the slight comparison possible in such a study as this shows that in essential quality the Torah is as far removed from Assyria as from Egypt. That essential quality is inherent, "not in the form, but in the spirit and content of the individual institutions." [121] However much the form of the

[120] Ex. 23: 14–17.

[121] Kent, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

Torah may have felt the influence of Assyria or of any other people, its sanctions are such as were utterly unknown to them: "The powerful influences which made Israel's laws a guide and inspiration for all later ages came from within." [122]

From within? What was there in the heart of Israel that set him so immeasurably apart from other peoples? The question can have but one answer. The laws of Israel are what they are, they are ethically so far above those of Egypt and Assyria, those by which modern society is governed, because of the indwelling presence of the Spirit of God in the heart of Israel. If in any part of the Old Testament the diary of the converse of heaven with earth is to be found, it is surely — I had almost said supremely — to be found in the Torah.

The laws of Israel came not from Egypt, nor from Babylon, nor from any of the nations with which Israel was brought in contact. It is impossible to study them carefully, to compare them with the laws and customs by which our modern society is governed, and not to feel convinced that they came direct from God.

[122] *Ibid.*

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